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# ***DISSERTATION***

*ADVANCE GRATITUDE EXPRESSIONS AS A PROSOCIAL APPEAL*

*WHEN A LITTLE THANKS CAN DO THE WORLD A GOOD*

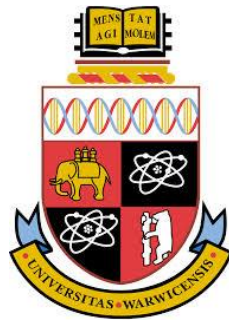
*by*

*Leandro Howard Galli*

*BA (HONS), University of Leeds, 2003*

*MLitt, University of St Andrews, 2005*

*MSc, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2009*



*A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF*

*THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF*

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## ***Abstract***

In this thesis I introduce and empirically test the novel concept of an advance gratitude expression as a prosocial appeal. I propose a conceptual framework which outlines when and how advance gratitude expressions may or may not result in increased prosocial tendencies. Across eight main studies (field, online and laboratory) one pilot and two follow-up studies, I demonstrate that (1) a simple advance gratitude expression can shape one's prosocial tendencies by making the perceived morality of the appeal appear more or less salient, and (2) the direction and magnitude of the effect is contingent on the donor's level of psychological connectedness to the cause. I test the validity and generalizability of my model by means of different operationalisations of the key theoretical constructs, dependent measures (financial donations, volunteering and cause related marketing purchases), study designs and sample populations.

In Study 1 I demonstrate the predicted main effect with a real behavioural outcome (donation amount) while additionally showing how the increased desire to act prosocially stems from increased moral awareness. In Studies 2-5, I identify psychological connectedness as a key moderator of the effect of advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour and I show that under conditions of low connectedness, in which consumers do not feel engaged with the prosocial cause, advanced gratitude expressions can backfire.

In Study 6, I provide a complete examination of my theoretical framework by testing for the conditional indirect effects of moral awareness on prosocial intent at different levels (high vs. low) of psychological connectedness to the cause. I show that when psychological

connectedness is low (high), advance gratitude expressions result in a decrease (increase) in prosocial intent via a reduced (increased) moral awareness. Through a moderation of process design, study 7 offers conclusive evidence for the notion that moral awareness is the underlining mechanism. Finally, in Study 8, I identify a theoretically important boundary condition for the documented main effect; advance gratitude expressions fail to increase prosocial behaviour in the case of individuals whose moral identity centrality is already chronically high.

This dissertation's findings are of theoretical significance because they add to the gratitude, morality and prosocial literatures and are of practical significance because they provide non-profit organizations as well as managers of private enterprises engaging in charitable work, with actionable insights that can help them design more effective prosocial appeals.

## ***Declaration***

I declare that this work is my own and that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## ***Preface***

I am the primary author of the work presented in this Ph.D. dissertation. I was responsible for carrying out the literature review, developing the hypotheses, designing the experiments, collecting the data, analysing the data, and writing the manuscript.

The various sample sizes used for statistical power are a function of constraints imposed by the subject pools used, as well as the expected variability of the novel effect covered in this dissertation. Consequently, studies that drew on the student participant pool or field studies conducted on campus tended toward sample sizes of 25+ per cell, whereas those that used an Amazon Mechanical Turk or Bilendi online samples benefitted from more ample sizes of 42+ per cell.

A portion of this dissertation was submitted and accepted at: EMAC, 2016 (European Marketing Academy Conference) and ACR, 2016 (Association for Consumer Research).

The research presented in this dissertation was made possible thanks to an ESRC scholarship.

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## ***Dedication***

*I would like to dedicate this work to my late father Alessandro Galli, (Papà, I am sorry time was not on our side) and to my mother Myra Galli, who have always believed in me and supported me during my journey. I hope to make you both proud.*

## ***Chapter 1: Introduction***

Each day across the globe millions of people are forced to rely on the kindness of others for their mere survival and basic well-being. Charitable organisations worldwide do great work, but they too are relying on the generous support of others to provide those in need with key services and care. Individual donors are the biggest source of funding for charities, for instance, in the US 71% of annual charitable donations come from private individuals (National Philanthropic Trust, 2017) and in the UK this figure is more than half (56%) (NCVO, 2016). Last year, UK residents alone donated an estimated £19.4 billion to national and international causes that ranged from education, fighting hunger and disease, to supporting the environment and wildlife (NCVO, 2016; CAF, 2016).

Yet, in spite of charities now also adopting many of the more sophisticated marketing techniques employed by their for profit counterparts (Ives, 2004) raising funds remains an arduous task; it necessitates considerable time and effort and solicitations for charitable donations cost UK non-profits £5.4 billion a year (NCVO, 2016). Even for the United Kingdom, a nation with a proud and long-standing philanthropic tradition, the present economic climate of scarcity and financial uncertainty is placing growing demands and constraints on people's generosity. As a testament to this, donation levels have been steadily falling in the past few years (CAF, 2016) and many charitable organisations are experiencing growing difficulty attracting the much needed financial and volunteer support (Wigglesworth, 2012).

In response, there have been appeals by senior governmental figures for citizens to exhibit greater prosocial behaviour (Scott, 2009; Watt, 2010). The UK Cabinet Office has gone as far as setting up a £10m “Innovation in Giving Fund” whose remit is to research new ideas that might encourage people to donate more time and money to causes they value (Nesta, 2014). There is clearly a recognised and pressing need to develop new fundraising strategies (Nesta, 2014) and the current debate within the charity sector revolves around how best to “ask” potential donors for support (YouGov, 2012). This is undeniably an important question, statistics show that the primary reason why people get involved with charitable causes is because “they were asked by someone”. In the UK, two out of three people donate because prompted (YouGov, 2012) which indeed suggests that the manner in which people are asked could be of critical importance. Surely, if people are to be expected to engage in greater prosocial behaviour, defined as: the voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit “others” ( individual(s), animals or even the environment) these types of behaviours must be solicited in a manner that taps into a person’s underlying motivations.

Prior work has examined the efficacy of persuasive strategies and message framing in prosocial appeals (Chang and Lee 2009; Fennis, Janssen and Vohs 2009; Kristofferson, White and Peloza 2014; Kronrod, Grinstein and Wathieu 2011; Liu and Aaker, 2008; White and Simpson 2013; White and Peloza 2009; Ye, Teng, Yu and Wang 2015). For instance, White and Peloza (2009) found that relative to self-benefit appeals, other-benefit appeals produce greater donation support in contexts that heighten, versus minimize, public self-image concerns. Kronrod et al., (2011) demonstrated that assertive appeals work better than soft appeals when the perceived importance of the issue at stake is high, versus low. White and Simpson (2013) found that normative appeals are most effective when the collective self

is activated, but self-benefit appeals are most effective when the individual self is made salient.

A separate stream of research has studied how individual donor traits can motivate benevolence. Studies have looked at identity congruency (Shang, Reed and Croson 2008; Winterich, Zhang and Mittal 2012; Winterich and Barone 2011) in-group vs. out-group effects, agency-communion orientation (Brunel and Nelson 2000; Duclos and Barasch 2014; Levine, Prosser, Evans and Reicher 2005; Winterich, Mittal and Ross 2009) and psychological distance more broadly (Ein-Gar and Levontin 2013; Henderson, Huang and Chang 2012). On the whole the findings suggest that benevolence is higher when the donor's traits make them feel closer to the beneficiary. Other work has explored charity recipient effects, focusing primarily on the description of recipients in terms of a number or single unit (i.e. the single identifiable victim effect or groups of victims that can be perceived as entitative; Kogut and Ritov 2007; Small, Lowenstein and Slovic 2007; Smith, Faro and Burson; 2013). Findings from this research converge to the notion that portraying a single person in need or a group as a single increases donations because such appeals are emotionally engaging, eliciting empathy for the donation recipient.

Most psychologists, would agree that emotions are important guides for human judgement and consumer decision-making (Clore and Huntsinger, 2007; Lewis, Haviland-Jones, Barrett; 2010), and although the importance of the role of donor experienced emotions, such as empathy and sympathy, has been well recognised and researched to date (Basil, Ridgway, Basil 2008; Batson et al. 1991; Batson, Early, Salvarini 1997; Ford and Merchant, 2010; Small and Simonsohn, 2009; Small and Verocchi, 2009; Liu and Aaker 2008;



Loewenstein and Small 2007), less attention has been given to investigating the role that victim expressed emotions can have on donor perceptions and charitable giving.

One important such emotion is gratitude. Gratitude is inherently linked to the interests and welfare of others (Haidt, 2003). Gratitude is a positive moral affect and an indispensable part of altruistic behaviour (Emmons and McCullough, 2004, McCullough et al., 2001). Gratitude expressions are universally regarded as a socially desirable virtue that benefits humankind on numerous levels (Komter, 2004; Lambert and Fincham, 2011). Yet, hitherto gratitude remains a relatively under researched emotion especially in the area of consumer psychology. In fact, in the specific domain of prosocial behaviour, only a handful of studies (i.e. Grant and Gino, 2010; Panagopoulos, 2011; Raggio and Folse, 2011, Raggio and Folse, 2009) have investigated how expressing gratitude and appreciation to a benefactor in response to a good deed received, can motivate further prosocial behaviour from the benefactor.

While recognising that research has uncovered a valuable means for eliciting additional gestures of altruism, an inherent limitation lies in the fact that the efficacy of such appeals is conditional on the donor having already acted prosocially. This dissertation aims to address this limitation by proposing and testing the novel notion of an advance expression of gratitude.

In concomitance with the rising recognition of the role that emotions can play in shaping human judgement and decision making and more specifically moral judgements of a prosocial nature (Avramova and Inbar; 2013), a growing body of research has also explored

the distinct role that the moral self or moral identity<sup>1</sup>, namely the degree to which moral traits (e.g. fairness, compassion, justice) are central to a person's self-definition, play in shaping prosocial behaviour. Studies on moral identity have established ample evidence of its predictive validity; when moral identity is chronically high or temporally activated it influences prosocial behaviour (Aquino, McFerran, and Laven 2011; Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim and Felps 2009; Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed, Aquino, Levy, 2007; Boegershausen, Aquino, Reed 2015; Reed and Aquino 2003; Lee, Winterich and Ross, 2014; Winterich, Mittal, Aquino; 2013; Winterich, Zhang, Mittal, 2012; Winterich, et al., 2009). Yet, even though the importance of morality in motivating prosocial deeds has been widely demonstrated, a fertile and topical avenue for further research is what kind of donation appeals may get potential donors to recognise the request as a worthwhile moral cause in the first instance.

Based on the premises that gratitude is a moral (Emmons and McCullough, 2004; McCullough et al. 2001) and that emotional responses can act as the antecedents to moral judgement (Haidt, 2003; Haidt et al, 2000) the present research investigates how an advance expression of gratitude, can act as an effective prosocial appeal by awakening the donor's "sleepy moral self". It is proposed that advance gratitude expressions such as a simple "Thank you in advance for your support" can shape prosocial behaviour by increasing the donor's moral awareness. I further elucidate upon the mechanism by demonstrating that perceived psychological connectedness to the cause moderates the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour, such that when psychological connectedness is low (and people do not identify nor feel engaged with the prosocial cause), advance gratitude expressions can fall on deaf ears or even backfire because moral awareness is reduced.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms moral self and moral identity interchangeably.

This thesis thus makes theoretical contributions that lie at the intersection of three literatures: charitable giving, moral identity and emotions. It also offers important practical guidance regarding the role of advance gratitude expressions and psychological connectedness on charitable giving for marketers of charitable organizations. In sum, and on a more general level, the current research offers several contributions that deepen our understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of prosocial appeals.

The rest of this dissertation is organised as follows: In chapter two, I review the relevant literature and I present the conceptual background and framework that I use to develop my hypotheses. In chapter three, I describe the experimental studies that test the proposed hypotheses. In order, I report the findings from each study and I discuss and summarise the theoretical and substantive insights that emerge from each. Chapter four discusses the theoretical contributions of my research and in chapter five I draw the reader's attention to the practical implications of the work. Chapter 6 notes some general limitations and highlights avenues for future research. In chapter 7, I provide my concluding remarks.

## ***Chapter 2: Conceptual Background and Hypotheses Development***

### ***2.1 Moral decision-making***

While the precise nature of moral beliefs may vary across time and space, the basic premise that there is such a thing as “right” and “wrong” transcends cultural boundaries (Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller; 1987 in Bartels, Bauman, Cushman, Pizarro and McGraw; 2015). Moral decision-making is ubiquitous and is a part of our everyday life, regularly shaping the choices and actions we make. It concerns actions that affect not only the actor but also others; this includes judgments of justice, rights, and welfare, such as loss of life or physical harm, or other threats to autonomy, that relate to how individuals ought to treat each other (Turiel, 1983, p. 3). Deciding whether or not to provide assistance to others in need entails, at the very least, making a judgement about the welfare of others, consequently prosocial behaviour and morality go hand in hand. Indeed, many ethicists (e.g., Kant, 1959/1785; Singer, 1981) and psychologists (e.g., Eisenberg, 2000; Gilligan, 1982) would go as far as ascertaining that actions which demonstrate a social responsiveness to the needs and interests of others are a defining feature of morality.

Judgements of morality carry an inherently strong motivational component (Skitka et al., 2005; see also Hume, 1888); we are more prone to act on our moral attitudes than we are to act on strong, yet non-moral attitudes (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka and Bauman, 2008). Until only recently, moral judgement was understood through the lens of the rationalist approach (the cognitive development model) which posited that moral knowledge and judgment are reached by means of conscious and deliberate processes of reasoning and reflection

(Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1932/1965; Turiel, 1983). The underlying assumption was that it was primarily the sophistication of a person's moral reasoning that would predict moral behaviour. Yet, empirical research uncovered little evidence in support of the rationalist thesis, studies found the strength of the association between moral reasoning and behaviour to be only small or moderate at best (Walker, 2004).

In response, models based on self-regulatory principles have been proposed challenging the view that moral reasoning is the single or even primary means by which moral judgments are reached. Such models posit that it is situational contexts and stimuli which can automatically, effortlessly and subconsciously elicit moral intuitions that subsequently guide moral judgement (see for instance Aquino and Reed, 2002; Haidt 2001; Leavitt, Zhu and Aquino; 2015; Narvaez and Lapsley, 2005). Moral reasoning may still play a role, but often only ex facto as a justification strategy.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, and while by and large we are driven to act in accordance with our moral beliefs (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli and Pastorelli; 1996), in practice we can experience difficulty recognising what is “right” or “wrong”. Morality is thus not always intrinsic to a situation or stimulus, and the moral valence of situations or stimuli may not be apparent to the perceiver, rather it can be the result of construing actions as morally relevant (Bartels et al, 2014; Bartels, 2008; Pizarro and Bloom; 2003). Hence, the same action could be evaluated as moral or not (Van Bavel, Packer, Haas and Cunningham, 2012).

### ***2.1.1 Moral Awareness***

Models of moral decision-making draw a distinction between the notions of moral awareness and moral judgement. Moral awareness is as a person's determination that a situation contains moral content and can be legitimately considered from a moral point of view (Reynolds, 2006, Reynold, 2008). It is the idea that even at a subconscious level an individual recognises a stimulus/situation as morally relevant. Moral judgement, is the established morality of the course of action (Butterfield, Trevin and Weaver, 2000; Trevino, Weaver and Reynolds; 2006). The distinction between these two phases in the moral decision-making process is a rather important one because it can account for instances of moral failures that result from circumstances in which individuals have failed, a priori, to evaluate a situation or action according to moral criteria. To date, psychological research has predominantly focused on moral judgement, inter alia, studies have looked at how the stimulus, social context or characteristics of the perceiver can shape judgements of right or wrong (Eyal, Liberman and Trope, 2008; Schnall, Haidt, Clore and Jordan, 2008; Valdestolo and Desteno, 2006; Wheatley and Haidt; 2005). Nonetheless, before a moral judgement can be reached, on even a more automatic and subconscious level, an individual's evaluative system must be receptive to evaluating the stimulus in accordance with moral principles; the perceiver needs to be morally aware and moral awareness may need to be situationally cued.

It thus stands to reason that if one is to fully comprehend moral judgement and therefore also prosocial behaviour, it is necessary to adopt an interactionist approach, of the nature of a social-cognitive model of morality that can account for aspects of the decision maker, as well as aspects of the situational context (i.e. stimulus) (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Rai and Fiske, 2011).

## ***2.2 The socio-cognitive model of moral identity and its link to moral awareness and prosocial behaviour***

A central tenet of the social-cognitive model is that situational cues can temporarily influence the processing of social information by triggering particular knowledge structures or schemas that form part of an individual's self-concept. A schema can be thought of as an organised cognitive representation of beliefs, values and behaviours (Aquino and Reed, 2002). In the words of Cantor (1990, p738) schemas are the “cognitive carriers of dispositions”, they inform the evaluation of a social situation and of affective responses, they channel individuals to seek out schema relevant task and goals. Each individual holds a multitude of schemas in his/hers working self-concept, but for any individual some schemas are more accessible than others. Schemas that are chronically more accessible or that have been rendered momentarily more accessible (activated) by situational cues or primes channel one's attention to specific aspects of an experience at the expense of others (Higgins, 1999). This cognitive processing however need not be controlled, deliberate or explicit and indeed there is mounting evidence to the contrary (Lapsley, 2016, Aquino and Reed, 2002).

Building on social-cognitive theory, Aquino and Reed (2002) contend that schemas are at the heart of morality, conceptualising moral identity as a broad network of inter-related moral traits associations (i.e. being nice), feelings (i.e. concern for others) and behaviours (i.e. helping others) that collectively determine a person's moral nature. In other words, moral identity is theorised as acting as a self-regulatory mechanism that links individuals to others by means of a set of moral associations, where the strength of such moral associations reflects the extent to which a person's moral identity is chronically important. It thus follows that, a

moral person is one for whom such moral constructs are chronically accessible and so central to his/hers self-definition.

Moral identity is comprised of two dimensions; internalisation and symbolisation, which equate to the private and public aspects of the self, respectively. The former captures the centrality of a person's moral self-schema and represents the chronic experience of one's moral identity (Aquino and Reed, 2002). The latter, reflects the importance placed on exhibiting a public moral self and is therefore susceptible to impression management and self- verification motives (Winterich, Mittal and Aquino, 2013; Winterich, Aquino, Mittal and Swartz, 2013). The motivational strength of one's moral identity resides in one's innate desire for self-consistency (Blasi, 1984) and in line with the premises of social cognitive theory, moral identity guides people's moral behaviour when it is either chronically important or made temporally active. Situational cues can trigger the accessibility of one's moral identity and when this is accessible one's evaluative system becomes attuned to evaluating actions in moral terms. One automatically recognises (even on a preconscious level) the moral relevance of the situation; that is, moral awareness is increased and the motivation to act morally is strengthened (Bargh, 1989).

A recent review of the literature on the moral self, (Jennings, Mitchell and Hannah, 2015) stands as a testament to the construct's impressive empirical record as a predictor of moral conduct. In the domain of prosocial behaviour, research by Reed and Aquino (2002, 2003) and Winterich et al (2009) found that people who are high on moral identity experience an expanded circle of moral regard and are more supportive of out-group members in need. Similarly, Reed, Aquino and Levy (2007), report that individuals with a strong moral identity exhibit an increased likelihood of participating in more engaging



prosocial acts, preferring to donate to charitable causes their time (volunteer) as opposed to just donating money.

Of greater relevance to the present thesis, is a body of research that has provided evidence for the effect of situational cuing on moral identity centrality (Aquino and Reed, 2002; Aquino et al, 2009). Aquino et al. (2009) demonstrated that by getting participants to list as many of the 10 Commandments as possible moral identity centrality could be increased, as measured by a score on the 5-item measure of moral internalisation (Aquino and Reed, 2002). Most pertinently however, the effect was only observed on people whose moral identity was, to begin with, chronically low. For individuals with a high moral identity, the prime had no effect, since for such individuals moral identity was already central to the self and accessible. Leavitt et al (2015) even showed that contextual cues (getting participants to complete a word completion task that contained moral words) could activate one's moral identity, outside of one's conscious awareness. Furthermore, consistent with the findings of Aquino et al (2009) and Leavitt et al, (2015), Reynolds (2008), makes the point that moral identity<sup>2</sup> is a predictor of one's moral awareness and reports evidence in support of his claim by means of a regression analysis.

In sum, there is mounting evidence to support the theoretical argument that situational cues can activate moral identity and that in turn an activated moral identity results in a more attentive and aware moral self. Yet, to the best of my knowledge it has not yet been shown if and how an emotional expression or signal, can act as a precursor to increased moral awareness and motivate moral conduct. In the next two sections, I propose and explain how and why an advance expression of gratitude can act as such a subtle cue.

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<sup>2</sup> Reynolds does not use the language of moral identity. He employs the term moral attentiveness to describe a chronically accessible framework of morality.

### ***2.3 Gratitude: a moral construct***

Gratitude is ubiquitous in social life and has been described as the cement of human society; a social resource that is essential for the development of goodwill (Komter, 2004). Gratitude is experienced and expressed when altruistic or helpful benefits are received, and while it is indeed a social emotion that is the fruit of social exchanges (McCullough et al., 2001), it is also a higher level moral emotion because it is intrinsically linked to the notion of fairness and to prosocial behavior more generally. Termed by Cicero (1851) as “not only the greatest, but also the parent of all virtues”, and by Androcles, as “the sign of noble souls”, gratitude has throughout history been recognised as assuming a central and distinctive role in the moral and prosocial domain. Across cultures, it is universally regarded as a virtue and moral philosophers have described it as a key component to a moral personality (Hardy, Walker, Olsen, Skalski, & Basinger, 2011; Hurst-house, 1999, Taylor, 2002).

The concept of gratitude has been revived in force by more recent theorists who contend that emotions are often the controlling force in moral decisions and behaviours, and that emotional responses are the antecedents of moral judgment (Haidt et al., 2000). For example, McCullough et al.’s (2001) conceptualisation of gratitude as a moral affect, substantiates the view that expressed gratitude is central to how individuals negotiate their moral and interpersonal relationships by noting it serves the function of a moral reinforcer; saying a simple “Thank You”, after receiving help, reinforces benefactors for their generosity and makes them more likely to act altruistically again in the future. Expressions of gratitude thus form part of a process of fair exchange; they reveal willingness on behalf of the beneficiary to honour a benefactor’s moral virtues (Kant, 1964), and by expressing gratitude one recognises that the benefactor has acted with fairness and justice in considering and

responding to the welfare needs of others. Put differently, gratitude goes hand in hand with an increased moral awareness thereby creating a moral basis for interactions. In the words of Buck (in Emmons and McCullough, 2004) it “is the oil that acknowledges mutual civility”.

## ***2.4 Gratitude expressions***

As already briefly noted, most of past research that has examined the role of gratitude in prosocial behaviour has investigated the consequences of expressing gratitude after some helpful or prosocial act had already been made (Grant and Gino, 2010; Panagopoulos, 2011; Raggio and Folse, 2009; 2011). For example, Raggio and Folse (2011 and 2009) studied the effects of the Louisiana, Katrina post-hurricane “thank you” campaign and found that members of the public, who stated being exposed to the campaign’s message, reported an increased intention to continue providing assistance in the form of financial donations as well as volunteerism. The authors additionally found that people reported more positive attitudes towards the state of Louisiana and its inhabitants, a greater willingness to pay a premium for the state’s products and services, an increased desire to travel to the state as well as a willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth. Raggio and Folse’s findings suggest that the benefits of gratitude expressions could even extend beyond the social realm to a more commercial setting.

Nevertheless, while providing some encouraging evidence in favour of the applicability of gratitude expressions to mass communication and more marketing orientated campaigns, it should be observed that the findings were derived from a single, field, cross-sectional survey and are therefore subject to limitations that are inherent with any survey design. Although the field study’s ecological validity was a plus, it was highly context-

dependent, and the research design could not firmly establish causal linkages. Indeed, respondents were not assigned to conditions, and because of reliance on self-reporting, it was difficult to determine with any accuracy which respondents participated in the relief activities or even which respondents saw the thank you message. The authors themselves acknowledge the need for additional experimental work, while also calling for more research into understanding the mechanisms of gratitude.

Other recent work has more broadly focused on trying to establish the effectiveness of providing donor recognition or the offering of small “thank you” gifts on charitable behaviour (i.e. Falk, 2007; Fisher and Ackerman, 1998; Winterich et al, 2013). For instance, Fischer and Ackerman, (1998), examine the effects of recognition, which they define as a public expression of appreciation, operationalised in terms of earned conditional rewards (gifts) such as T-shirts and plaques that are offered to individuals conditional upon them donating. They find that promising such rewards can increase volunteering but only when the group seeking support is portrayed as needy.

Winterich and colleagues argue that the efficacy of a recognition strategy, which they define as an explicit expectation by the donor that their donation behaviour will receive attention by one or more people is conditional on the interaction of two distinct dimensions of one’s moral identity: internalisation and symbolisation. They demonstrate that recognition expressed in the form of either a card of acknowledgement from the charitable organization or being promised that one’s name will feature on a website of donors results in increased prosocial behaviour (volunteerism) for individuals who possess relatively low moral identity internalisation but high moral identity symbolisation. They shed light on the mechanism by

demonstrating that a process of social reinforcement<sup>3</sup> mediates the effect of recognition, moderated by the moral identity symbolisation and internalisation interaction. This is because social reinforcements act as self-verification of a donor's moral identity, that is, recognition of prosocial behaviour socially reinforces one's moral identity, confirming a donor's moral identity to him or herself. Recognition strategies have no effect on individuals who are chronically high in moral identity internalisation, because such individuals do not require the recognition of others to act prosocially, as they are *a priori*, internally motivated, they experience self-consistency of their moral identity simply by acting altruistically. Conversely, social reinforcement that results from recognition is especially important to those individuals who are low on internalisation but high on symbolisation because while lacking intrinsic self-consistency such individuals still seek to express their moral selves by means of their interactions with the social world and are therefore responsive to the recognition of others.

In a single randomised field study, Falk (2007) investigates the effect of small unconditional thank you gifts (gifts that are given regardless of whether or not someone donates) on charitable donations. 9846 solicitation letters were sent to potential donors of a large charitable organisation that supports children in need. In addition to the letter, some people received either a "small" or "large" gift. The small gift consisted in a postcard that showed coloured paintings drawn by children. The large gift comprised of four such postcards. The postcards were framed as gifts from the children in need. The results showed that compared to the no gift condition, the relative frequency of donations, as well as the total amounts donated increased as the gift size increased. The author attributes the effect to norms of reciprocity in gift exchange.

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<sup>3</sup> Social reinforcement covers the remarks or behaviour of others that work to reinforce a person's identity to him- or herself through the reflected appraisals of others.

## ***2.5 Advance gratitude expressions***

As mentioned previously, prior studies have looked at the effects of conditional and unconditional “thank you” gifts and post hoc expressions of thanks, yet what remains unexplored, is whether, “an advance gratitude expression”, can persuade individuals to act benevolently. I define an advance gratitude expression as an instance in which gratitude is articulated to prospective benefactors prior to them providing or agreeing to provide assistance.

It is worth remarking how this proposed construct of advance gratitude expressions is conceptually and practically distinct from prior research on recognition manipulations and “thank you” gifts. First, extant research (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998; Newman and Shen, 2012; Winterich et al, 2013) has tended to make the receipt of “thank you” gifts conditional upon a donation being made to the charity. This is clearly different from an unconditional advance gratitude expression that is embedded in the request for assistance. Also, research that has looked at the consequences of providing people with unconditional “thank you” gifts (such as postcards) (i.e. Falk, 2007) has explained the resultant effects in terms of norms of reciprocity. However, there is an abundance of evidence in the psychology literature to support the view that gratitude effects are distinct from any social norm effect of reciprocity (Algoe et al. 2008; Algoe and Haidt, 2009). It therefore seems that work conducted on the effects of unconditional “thank you” gifts may have failed to effectively disentangle the effects of “gift giving” from those of a mere expression of gratitude. Put differently, “thank you” gifts simply do not directly equate to articulated expressions of gratitude.

Secondly, on a practical level, a further distinction not to be overlooked is that advance gratitude expressions can be provided at no further cost and without additional inconvenience. This is evidently not the case of “thank you” gifts/rewards and most types of recognition manipulations so far studied. Furthermore, one could argue that “thank you” gifts, regardless of the form they may take (i.e. plaque or T-shirt) are more public and time enduring forms of recognition (for instance, one can keep one’s “thank you” plaque on display for others to see, and/or as a constant visual personal reminder of one’s past good actions). By contrast, advance gratitude expressions, as operationalised and manipulated in the present dissertation, are time bound to the moment of the solicitation and are more private in nature.

Finally, and most importantly, as I have argued thus far, gratitude expressions have a moral nature and this attribute is central to the present research. Prior work has determined that individuals may withhold help because they are unsure whether beneficiaries will value their help (Rosen et al., 1987). Indeed it has been found that gratitude expressions when delivered post hoc can confer a sense of social worth that mitigates people’s feeling of uncertainty about whether the assistance provided was valued, thereby encouraging additional prosocial conduct (Grant and Gino, 2010). However, in this thesis, I propose that another significant consideration which can influence a person’s motivation to provide assistance in the first place, is the perceived morality of the request because while donating to a cause may be generally viewed as a moral act, this in fact, is not always the case (Lee et al., 2014 ). People may in the first instance refuse to help others if it is not apparent that is it the right thing to do, when the moral implications associated with the act are not salient.

To recapitulate based on all of the above theorising, I make the novel proposition that advance gratitude expressions can signal something about the request itself, by rendering potential benefactors more morally aware of the significance of the act. Namely, I propose that because of the moral nature of gratitude, and the fact that traits and constructs related to morality are theorised to trigger the activation of moral criteria and awareness (Aquino et al., 2009; Leavitt et al., 2015; Reed and Aquino, 2002; Reynolds et al 2010, Reynolds, 2008), an advance gratitude expression will awaken one's moral identity. This increased moral awareness, is expected to translate in greater prosocial behaviour. More formally put I hypothesise that:

***H1:** Advance gratitude expressions result in increased prosocial behaviour.*

***H2:** The effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour is mediated by moral awareness.*

## ***2.6 Psychological connectedness and its moderating role***

Because of its moral nature, gratitude is in its essence an other-focused, communal and interpersonally oriented emotion (Tangney et al., 2007 ). The very capacity to feel and express gratitude is contingent on the existence of a relationship, actual or perceived, and prior research has revealed that people are more receptive to other-focused emotional appeals when psychological connectedness to others is high (Aaker and Williams, 1998). Consequently, I posit that the extent to which one feels connected to others should also influence how individuals perceive and respond to advance gratitude expressions. I adopt Gino and Galinsky's (2012) definition of psychological connectedness as "feelings of



attachment and perceived connection toward another person, group or cause”. Here, the notion of “others” is not restricted to another individual or group but can also entail a more general connectedness to social or even environmental and nature related causes (Winterich and Barone, 2011).

A rich history of research suggests that psychological connectedness is a fundamental human driver for social interactions (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). One way of conceptualising connectedness, is through the lens of social identity theory (Winterich and Barone, 2011). Social identity can be understood as an “ individual’s knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership” (Tajfel,1972:31) and the way that individuals define themselves, shapes how they connect and interact with others (Cross, Morris and Gore, 2002). Social identification thus determines the degree to which people perceive a connection with others (Oyserman, 2009) and is diagnostic for judgements that involve the consideration of others (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). The literature on social identity recognises that people commonly hold multiple identities, for instance an individual may identify himself as: a father, a husband, a football supporter and an environmentalist (Markus and Kunda, 1986). Each of these identities can become accessible at any point in time depending on factors associated with the decision at hand (Reed, 2004, Shavitt, Sharon, Torelli and Wong; 2009). The activation of a particular social identity triggers a level of connectedness and via the self-structure, an activated social identity acts as a filtering, interpretive framework shaping how information is perceived, interpreted and consequently acted upon (Kitayama and Markus, 1994). Although people are able to consciously assess the extent to which they identify with others and their cause, the process of identification and connection can in large part occur without conscious processing (Stapel and Koomen, 2000).

With a view to firmly demonstrating the validity of my theoretical framework and the generalisability of my findings in this thesis I operationalise connectedness to others through the lens of three distinct types of social identities: self-construal, gender and the ecological self.

Self-construal (independent vs. interdependent construal) is a form of social identity that represents an individual's general predisposition to identify with others and as such it is relevant to a wide variety of judgments and charitable appeals (Markus and Wurf, 1987). Interdependents conceptualise themselves as fundamentally connected to others, to whom they feel a sense of obligation. Independents on the other hand are concerned with not being influenced, and with keeping their distance, separating themselves from others as to display their qualities of uniqueness (Singelis, 1994). Therefore having an interdependent versus an independent self, emphasises particular domains of concern, leading to different levels of accessibility and responsiveness to other-focused, interpersonal emotions such as gratitude (Kim and Johnson, 2013; Aaker and Williams, 1998).

Gender is a more specific, innate trait based form of identity that will only be relevant in contexts where gender is salient (Shang, Reed and Croson, 2008). The psychological literature suggests that one's gender is an important aspect of one's identity (Bem, 1981). People, who view gender as a defining feature of the self, tend to embrace either a "female" or "male" identity and prior work has demonstrated that people exhibit a higher level of psychological connectedness (identify more strongly) with gender identity congruent charities (Shang, Reed and Croson, 2008). That is, males feel a greater sense of connection to male specific charitable causes than females, whereas females feel a greater sense of connection to female specific charitable causes than males. Consequently, males vs. females

will respond differently to advance gratitude expressions depending on whether these come from gender congruent vs. incongruent charitable appeals.

Finally, one's ecological identity represents one's psychological connectedness to nature. Individuals who define themselves as ecological, choose to embrace an identity that revolves around a specific set of formed values and beliefs about nature and the importance of nature to the self (Tam, 2013). As such the strength of one's ecological identity plays an important role in decisions that involve the environment, nature and wildlife (i.e. nature, wildlife and environment related charities). Individuals who possess a strong (weaker) ecological identity will therefore be more (less) receptive to advance gratitude expressions, as a form of prosocial appeal, when these are embedded in the marketing stimuli of nature related causes.

To the extent that gratitude is an other-focused and communal emotion (Tangney, Stuewig, Mashek, 2007; Triandis, 1994), I postulate that when psychological connectedness to others is high, individuals will place greater value on the social interaction and be more receptive and positively responsive to advance gratitude expressions. Advance gratitude expressions will therefore be more likely to activate one's moral identity triggering a moral awareness that is expected to result in increased prosocial behaviour. On the other hand, when psychological connectedness to the recipients is low and so people do not a priori, identify and feel engaged with the cause, advance gratitude expressions could fall on deaf ears or even backfire. This is because under low levels of psychological connectedness, people are more inclined to keep their distance and avoid engaging with the cause. Under such conditions, advance gratitude expressions can elicit reactance; aversive reactions to felt

impositions in the form of unfavourable attitudes towards the proposal that is being imposed (Brehm, 1966, 1971; Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974; Dowd, Wallbrown, Sanders, and Yesenosky, 1994). Therefore, under low levels of psychological connectedness an advance gratitude expression is more likely to be perceived as an intrusive and manipulative marketing tactic. Indeed prior research has found that gratitude expressions can be interpreted as devious gestures (Carey, Clique, Leighton, Lambert, 1976). Consequently, one is less likely to recognise the moral significance of supporting the cause and this reduced moral awareness will result in lower levels of prosocial behaviour.

In sum and more formally put, I theorise that psychological connectedness to others moderates the relationship between advance gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour **(H3)** such that:

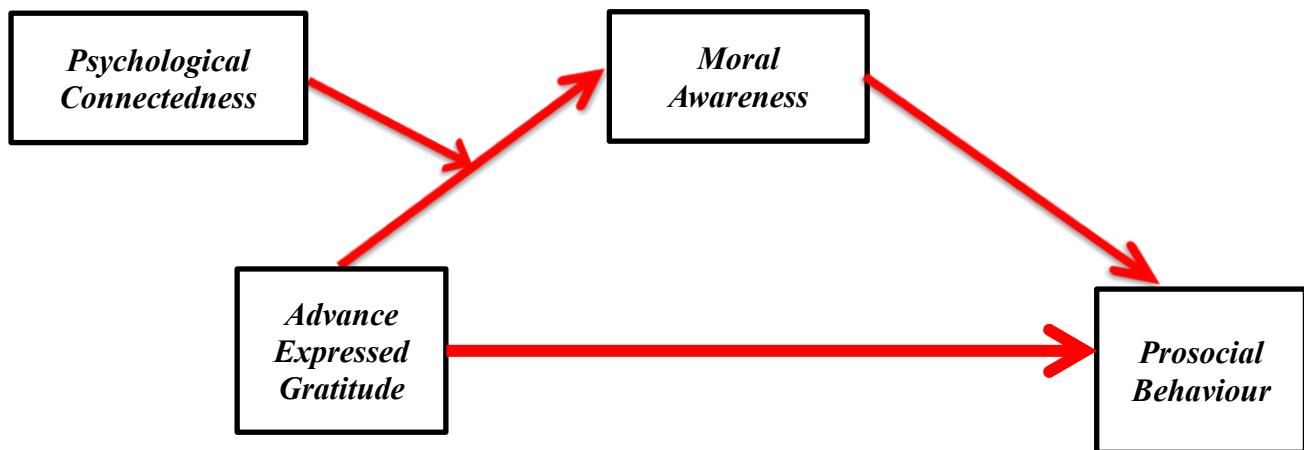
***H3a:** When connectedness is low, appeals that include an advance gratitude expression reduce prosocial behaviour compared to control appeals.*

***H3b:** When connectedness is high, appeals that include an advance gratitude expression increase prosocial behaviour compared to control appeals.*

Furthermore, I hypothesise that psychological connectedness to others moderates the relationship between advance gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour via moral awareness **(H4)** such that:

**H4a:** When connectedness is low, the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour is negatively mediated by moral awareness.

**H4b:** When connectedness is high, the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour is positively mediated by moral awareness.



**Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework of Dissertation**

## **2.7 Overview of the research**

In order to gain a sense of how novel and well-received advance gratitude expressions may be as a marketing practice, I begin with a brief descriptive, exploratory study of the phenomenon. The findings suggest that advance gratitude expressions are somewhat of a novel and underemployed practice in the prosocial domain of charitable giving. Yet, while on the whole positively received, mixed views responses regarding the appropriateness of using advance gratitude as a prosocial appeal provide some early indication that advance gratitude expressions are not a blunt tool and could in fact be a double-edged sword. Across 11

experiments (2 field, 1 laboratory and 8 online) I then examine how and when, written expressions of advance gratitude can exert an important influence on people's prosocial intent. I employ a variety of operationalisations and manipulations of the central theoretical constructs and I use different measures of prosociality.

In the pilot study, I conduct a field experiment that provides preliminary real world evidence that advance gratitude expressions result in increased prosocial behaviour. Also using a natural setting, but a different behavioural outcome, Study 1 replicates the effect. It also provides preliminary mediational evidence that the observed effect arises from increased moral awareness, while also casting doubt upon some potential alternative explanations for the finding.

Testing different operationalisations and manipulations for psychological connectedness, Studies 2-6 provide converging evidence that the impact of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial intent is conditional upon the degree of attachment one has to the cause, such that, when psychological connectedness is low, the effect can even be reversed. Studies 4-5, additionally establish that the effects of advance gratitude can stretch to the more commercial marketing setting of cause related marketing. Study 6 examines the full conceptual model, by testing for the conditional indirect effect of moral awareness on prosocial intent at different levels (high vs. low) of psychological connectedness to the cause. Consistent with the evidence from Study 1, under conditions of high connectedness, increased moral awareness mediates the effect of advance gratitude on prosocial intention. Importantly, Study 6 additionally demonstrates that under conditions of low psychological connectedness to the cause is low (i.e. when one does not feel close and engaged with the

cause) advance gratitude expressions result in a decrease in prosocial intent via reduced moral awareness.

Studies 1 and 6 tested for mediation statistically. Study 7 employs a moderation of process design and through this provides further evidence in support of the moral awareness mediational account. It also more directly rules out competing explanations (demand effects, norms of reciprocity) by demonstrating that advance gratitude expressions backfire when the appeal comes from a charity lacking ethical credibility. Finally, study 8 finds a boundary condition of the advance gratitude effect on prosociality. Specifically, the effect is not observed in the case of individuals whose moral identity centrality is chronically high. This finding is consistent with the conception that advance gratitude expressions work by awakening one's sleep moral self.

## *Chapter 3: Empirical Investigation*

### *3.1 Exploratory study*

I conducted an exploratory study to obtain a general sense of how advance gratitude expressions are perceived and in particular to gain some indication of how novel a marketing practice this may be. My intuitions were twofold: first, that on the whole respondents would not find advance gratitude expressions to be a commonly employed tactic by charities in their marketing communications. Second, that while on average people would regard the use of advance gratitude expressions an acceptable practice, views on the subject matter would be mixed and this would tentatively support the notion that for certain people and/or under certain conditions advance gratitude expressions might backfire.

#### *3.1.1 Sample and Procedure*

An international sample of two hundred and fifty three individuals was recruited online; age range of participants 18-72, mean age 30 years, SD 12.8, 70 % female. On the consent page participants were informed that they would be taking part in a two minute study about charity advertisements and that they would be required to study an advertisement and to answer some brief questions regarding their impressions about this. Upon consenting, participants were shown the advertisement of a food bank charity called FamilyWorks which requested donations on behalf of the Roberts family (pictured). The stimulus explained that since losing their jobs, the Roberts family had fallen on financial hardship and were struggling to provide for their three children. At the top of the stimulus it was written in bold capitals **“THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT FROM THE**



**ROBERTS FAMILY**". After viewing the advertisement, at their own leisure, participants were then asked if: a) they regarded advance expressions of gratitude to be a novel practice "*In general, how common do you find it is for charities to thank potential donors in advance? I.e. before a donation has been made?*" (1- not at all, 9 - very) and b) if they viewed the practice as appropriate "*How appropriate do you find it is for charities to express to potential donors their advance gratitude?*" (1 - not at all, 9 - very). Participants then provided demographic data and subsequently read a debriefing statement.

### ***3.1.2. Results and Discussion:***

*Novelty:* On a scale of 1 (not at all common) to 9 (very common), on average participants regarded the practice of using advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal to be around 1 point above the midpoint of the scale, with a mean of 5.4.

*Appropriateness:* Similarly, on a scale of 1 (not at all appropriate) to 9 (very appropriate), when asked how appropriate it was for charities to employ advance gratitude expressions, respondents reported a mean of 5.9 and standard deviation of 2.4. The above results are suggestive of two things: first, that at present, advance gratitude expressions are rarely employed by charities and there is certainly scope for their greater adoption. Second, while the use of advance gratitude expressions appears was positively perceived on average, judging by the high level of variance in the responses ( $SD = 2.4$ ), not everyone feels the same way. In fact, almost 20 % (50/253) of participants reported a 3 out of 9 or less on the appropriateness scale. In subsequent studies, I further develop the idea that advance gratitude expressions can backfire, and explore the conditions under which this may occur. Finally, there were no gender effects.

### **3.2 Pilot Field Study 1- Conference Questionnaire**

As an initial test of my central hypothesis that advance gratitude expressions lead to increased prosocial behaviour, I conducted a field experiment. My key prediction was that participants would be more inclined to complete a conference feedback survey when thanked in advance for their efforts (as opposed to not being thanked).

#### **3.2.1 Sample and Procedure**

Four hundred and ninety six participants registered in an industry conference were involved in this one-factor (advance gratitude expression vs. no advance gratitude guilt) study design. All the conference attendees received an e-mail from the conference organisers asking them to complete a short survey regarding their conference experience. At random, one half of the participants received the standard, “control” e-mail and the other half, received the same e-mail but with the addition of the advance gratitude expression manipulation. This was the only difference between the two groups and e-mails. The advance gratitude condition e-mail read as follows: *“Hi everyone, we are hoping to get you to complete this short survey on the conference. If you could take 5 minutes to fill out the survey that would be great! Thank you in advance for your help with this.”* The dependent variable was whether or not people choose to complete the survey.

#### **3.2.2 Results**

The data were analysed on an intention to treat basis, as I had no way of monitoring for bounced or opened e-mails. The percentage of conference participants that completed the

survey was higher in the advance gratitude condition ( $P = 100/248 = 40.3\%$ ) than the control (no advance gratitude condition) ( $P = 78/248 = 31.5\%$ ;  $\chi^2 (1) = 4.24$ ,  $p = .039$ ). In relative terms, this is equivalent to a 28 % increase in compliance.

### ***3.2.3 Discussion***

In a field setting, the results of my pilot study provide preliminary support for the prediction that advance gratitude expressions increase prosocial behaviour. Yet, while this simple field study methodology enabled me to examine people's actual behavioural response to receiving an advance gratitude expression in a purely naturalistic setting, this study did not shed any light on the underlying mechanism for the observed effect. In my next field study I address this issue while still maintaining a high level of ecological validity and increasing the generalisability of my findings.

### ***3.3 Study 1- BCSPCA animal welfare charity field study***

Study 1 had two principal objectives; first to replicate the key main effect finding of the pilot study that advance gratitude expressions increase actual prosocial behaviour, while focusing on a different behavioural outcome (donation amount) and using a diverse age sample. The second goal was to obtain some preliminary evidence in support of the hypothesised mediational mechanism of moral awareness.

#### ***3.3.1 Sample and Procedure***

N=50 partook in the one-factor study, (advance gratitude expression vs no advance gratitude expression), age 18-45; mean age 26.9, 64% female, 64% students. In exchange for

a \$ 3 cash payment, passers-by on a North American University campus were intercepted and asked to participate in a marketing research study conducted on behalf of a local charity. They were told the study involved evaluating an advertisement that the charity was considering introducing. For the purposes of the study I chose “The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BCSPCA)” a popular and well-known local cause. Upon consent, participants were randomly assigned to either the “advance gratitude expression” or the control (without gratitude) condition (see appendix 1, for the advance gratitude condition stimulus). The one-page A4 advertisement stimuli told the story of Gandalf, a recently rescued stray dog and solicited donations to help with the many more cases like Gandalf. The advance gratitude condition of the stimulus also included the following sentence: *“Thank you in advance for your support”*. This was the only difference between the two advertisements. Clearly, in real life situations, one can choose to express thanks to others for their help or not. As such, the decision to employ a control condition with nothing, was motivated by the fact that the present research is primarily interested in understanding whether advance gratitude expressions have an effect on prosocial behaviour in absolute terms (i.e. when compared to choosing not to express gratitude), and not whether advance gratitude expressions are relatively more or less effective than other possible types of appeals. This methodological approach and line reasoning is consistent with prior work in the field of gratitude expressions (i.e. see Grant and Gino, 2010).

After studying the stimulus at their own leisure, participants received an evaluation questionnaire and an open envelope containing \$3. Unbeknown to participants, those in the control vs intervention condition received different marked envelopes, so it would be later possible to match responses and donations to the correct condition. The evaluation questionnaire included some brief questions regarding participants’ attitudes and intentions

towards the advertisement. Other questions were intended to measure potential mediators. To capture the main outcome measure of donation amount, towards the end of the questionnaire, just before demographics, participants read the following:

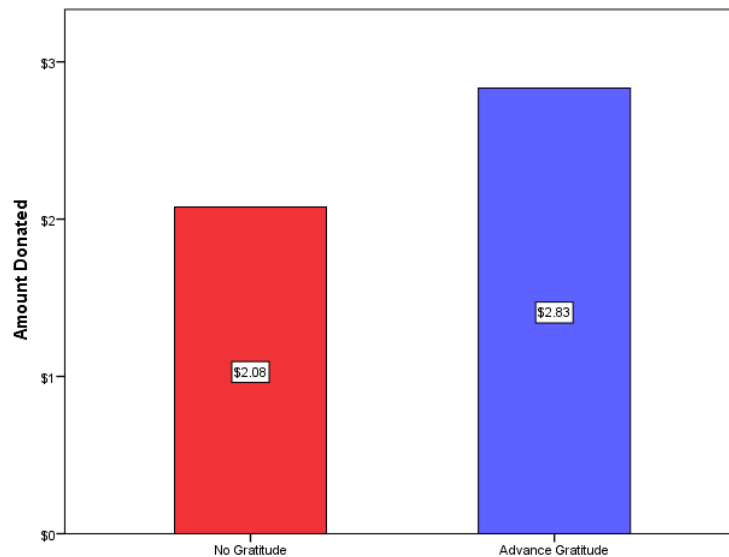
*“If you wish, you can make a financial donation to the BC SPCA. You can donate all of your \$3 payment, or you can decide to keep the \$3 for yourself. Please indicate below, what you would like to do by checking the box that applies. Keep in mind that the researcher doesn’t need to know the amount you contribute, you can just hand the envelope back to her with the donation inside it”.*

The donation options were: \$0, \$1, \$2, \$3. After completing the questionnaire, participants returned it along with any donated amounts in the sealed envelope.

### **3.3.2 Results**

*Primary Dependent Variable:* A one-way ANOVA with amount donated as the dependent variable was significant ( $F(1, 49) = 8.3, p = 0.01$ ). Participants in the advance gratitude condition donated more money to the charity ( $M = \$2.83, SD = 0.57$ ) compared to those in the control ( $M = \$2.08, SD = \$1.16$ ), 95% CI [1.28; 0.23]. Effect size, Cohen’s  $d = 0.82$ , Partial Eta Squared = 0.15. This amounts to a 36% increase in donation revenue.

I also tested whether demographic factors such as age and gender moderated the results, given that previous research has suggested that such variables may influence donation propensity (Winterich et al., 2009; Rooney et al, 2005). However, in this and all subsequent studies, I do not find that demographics have a moderating impact on the findings. I therefore do not report any further analysis on demographics.



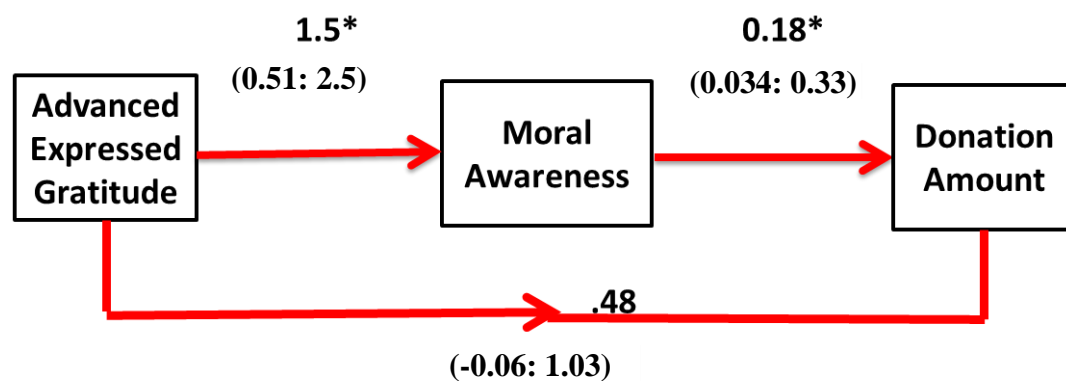
**Figure 3.1: Amount donated (\$) to charity as a function of advance gratitude**

*Secondary Dependent Variable:* As part of the cover story, participants were asked (by means of a single item measure) for their general attitude towards the advertisement. Similar pattern of results, ( $M_{\text{Gratitude}} = 7.5$ ,  $SD = 1.1$  VS.  $M_{\text{Control}} = 6.7$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ), significance levels ( $p = 0.01$ ), 95% CI [1.48; 0.22], and effect sizes ( $d = 0.76$ ) emerged to those of the dependent variable. Participants in the advance gratitude condition had a more positive attitude of the advertisement.

*Mediation Analysis:* I also sought to gain some early insights into the underlying mechanism and find preliminary evidence in support of the moral awareness mediation hypothesis. Moral awareness was measured with the following two items; “Contributing to the BC SPCA cause has moral implications”, “Contributing to the BC SPCA is the “right” thing to do” ( $r = 0.76$ ), anchored 1 (not at all), 9 (very much). I used the Preacher and Hayes (2008), bootstrapping procedure of 10,000 samples with replacement (process model 4) to test for mediation, because bootstrapping procedures are superior to previous mediation analysis (Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). The analysis revealed

that increased moral awareness fully mediated the relationship between advance gratitude on donation amount, the 95% CI, did not include zero ( $b = 0.27$ , C95: 0.0368, 0.6946). I also used the following single item measure “*Others expect me to donate*” to account for possible norms of reciprocity induced by the advance gratitude or demand effects, as a potential competing mechanism to the moral awareness explanation. For this, I found no evidence of mediation, ( $b = 0.03$ , C95: -0.0331, 0.2910).

**Figure 3.2 – Moral awareness mediation analysis**



\*  $p < 0.05$

### 3.3.3 Discussion

In a field setting, using a diverse age sample, I provide preliminary support for H1 and H2; that advance gratitude expressions result in actual increased prosocial behaviour and that the observed effect is mediated by increased levels of moral awareness towards the cause. More specifically, individuals who were exposed to a charity advertisement that contained the advance gratitude expression “*Thank you in advance for your support*”, donated on average 36% more money ( $M = \$2.83$  VS.  $M = \$2.08$ ) to the charity than those who were exposed to the advertisement without the advance gratitude expression, because the former were better able to recognise the moral significance of the appeal.

While this study clearly provides some promising initial findings, in the strictest interest of internal validity, some possible concerns with the employed study design are worth acknowledging upfront and addressing. A concern could lie with the precise operationalisation of the advance gratitude expression and, related to this, the choice of using a control advertisement that does not contain any form of appeal. One could contend that it is the solicitation for support in the advance gratitude expression of “Thank you in advance *for your support*”, that is driving the observed main effect (and not the advance gratitude per se). Using a control group with nothing, i.e. no other form of prosocial request, against which to compare the advance gratitude expression, does not allow one to directly address this concern. That said, one could rebut such an argument on the basis that; first, Study 1 finds evidence of a mediation effect of moral awareness, which is a) consistent with my theoretical argument and b) would not be expected, if the observed effect was actually driven by a mere solicitation for support. Second, and in support of the previous point, the study finds no mediational evidence for a demand effect.

Nevertheless, so as to provide more conclusive evidence against the claim that the observed main effect could be attributable to a solicitation for support and not to the advance expressed gratitude, I ran a post hoc study that compared the advance gratitude expression “*Thank you in advance for your support*” against the following two additional controls: “*Give your support*”, “*Please give your support*”. Kronrod et al, (2011) note that appeals for support can be broadly classified as either “assertive” or “soft” in nature and that under different conditions, one form of phrasing can be more effective than the other. I used this conceptual framework to inform my choice of controls, so that I would be able to run a more comprehensive test of the validity of the operationalization of the advance gratitude



construct. The post hoc study therefore included three control groups against which I compared the advance gratitude manipulation: an assertive appeal for support (*Give your support*), a soft appeal for support (*Please give your support*) and as a replication for Study 1, a no appeal condition.

### **3.3.4. Post hoc Study Sample and Procedure:**

One hundred and fifty seven individuals (66 % females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 24$ ,  $SD = 8$ ) were recruited online to partake in the one-factor randomised assignment between subjects design study. The study concerned a fictitious charity called Sponsor a Puppy. Prior to commencing the study participants were instructed that they would be required to study a charity's advertisement for the purposes of marketing research and asked for their attitudes and intentions towards the charity. Participants were then exposed to the advertisement stimulus which described the charity's mission (to train guide dogs for the visually impaired) and solicited donation support. As the dependent measure participants were subsequently asked to report their willingness to make a financial donation, for which a composite of the following two items ( $r = 0.8$ ) was used: "*How likely are you to sponsor a pup through the charity? How willing are you to sponsor a pup through the charity?*" Participants were then instructed to provide demographic data and were debriefed as to the purpose of the study.

### **3.3.5 Post hoc Study Results**

Prior to analysing the data, I removed 13 participants (7.64%) from the original dataset of 170, for failing the following attention check "*Please click on the strongly agree item, this is just to rule out random clicking*". Participants who do not read and follow study instructions

diligently, increase noise and decrease the power and validity of the data (Oppenheimer, Meyvis & Davidenko, 2009). All data and analysis reported in this and subsequent studies, is therefore only conducted on participants who passed the attention check.

The omnibus analysis of variance showed that the overall effect of appeal type on donation intention was significant,  $F(3,153) = 3.6, p = 0.02$ . More specifically, and with particular respect to the contrasts of interest, participants in the advance gratitude condition reported on average a higher level of donation intention ( $M = 5.8, SD = 1.6$ ) compared to those in the soft appeal control group ( $M = 4.8, SD = 1.9$ )  $p = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.76; 1.91],  $d = 0.57$ , assertive appeal condition ( $M = 4.2, SD = 2.0$ )  $p = 0.00$ , 95% CI [0.64; 2.43],  $d = 0.88$  and no appeal control condition ( $M = 4.8, SD = 2.3$ )  $p = 0.46$ , 95% CI [0.019; 1.93],  $d = 0.50$ .

These findings therefore provide further compelling evidence in support of the argument that the main effect observed in Study 1 is in fact attributable to advance gratitude and not to mere demand effects or more general effects associated with solicitations of support. Although somewhat tangential to the main purpose of this thesis, rather interestingly, this study also finds evidence to suggest that advance gratitude expressions can be more effective at inducing prosocial behaviour than other comparable types of appeals.

### ***3.4 Study 2- WWF charity and the endangered elephant cause***

Study 2 was conceived to build on the findings of Study 1 and it had several goals. Firstly, it sought to replicate the main effect field study finding that advance gratitude expressions lead to increased prosocial behaviour. Second, it aimed to increase the generalisability of the findings thus far by examining a different charity and demographic of respondents, using a real charity advertisement previously employed by WWF (the World

Wide Fund for Nature) and by focusing on a different yet equally important behavioural outcome; volunteering. Volunteers are unquestionably the flesh and blood of many charities and are indispensable to their existence. A recent study by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations testifies that 91% of UK charities have no paid staff and rely entirely on volunteers (Volunteers Week, 2014).

Thirdly, this study had also as an objective to conduct a preliminary test for the moderation effect of psychological connectedness to the cause on prosocial behaviour (H3). On the premise that: a) gratitude is an other-focused, communal and interpersonally oriented emotion, and therefore the degree to which one feels connected to others should determine how receptive one is to expressions of gratitude from them. And b) based on evidence from past research showing that people are more responsive to other-focused emotional appeals when connectedness to others is high (Aaker and Williams, 1998), I predicted that individuals who are exposed to a charity advertisement containing an advance gratitude expression will respond increasingly more generously to the appeal (compared to the control condition), the higher their level of psychological connectedness to the cause. In other words, I anticipate that the relative effectiveness of advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal is a function of the level of psychological connectedness that one experiences with the cause. As the charity in question (WWF) is a nature centric charity, psychological connectedness to the cause was measured using items from the validated nature relatedness scale by Nisbet, Zelenski and Murphy (2009) that seeks to capture the degree of psychological connectedness between nature and the self.

### 3.4.1 Sample and Procedure

Two hundred and eighty individuals of different nationalities were recruited via the market research company Bilendi to take part in the online study; age range 18-84, mean age 49.8 years, SD 14.4, 51 % male, 53 % possessed an undergraduate degree or above. Twenty four participants (9.3%) were removed from the dataset due to failing the attention check, this left a sample size of  $n = 256$ . During recruitment participants were informed they would be taking part in an academic study about advertisements. To reduce the risk of selection bias participants were not made aware upfront that the topic of research was charitable behaviour. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (with advance gratitude expression vs. without advance gratitude expression) between subjects experimental design. Participants received “loyalty points” from Bilendi for participating in the study. For each participant Bilendi in turn charged 50p. The approximate time duration of the study was 5 minutes.

*Covariates and Moderator:* The study commenced with participants being asked questions regarding their existing attitude towards the World Wide Fund for Nature charity; (1-item), their general volunteering habits (1-item), and their psychological connectedness to nature (2-items). Prior attitude to the charity was measured with the following item “*What is your general attitude towards the WWF charity?*” anchored 1 “bad”, 7 “good”; and extant volunteering behaviour was captured by “*How frequently do you volunteer for a charity or charities?*” anchored 1 (never), 7 (very often). These two measures were intended to be used as covariates to account for any prior perceptions of the charity and to control for existing volunteering commitments.

Psychological connectedness was measured using a composite of the following two items ( $r = 0.84$ ): “*I feel connected to all living things and the Earth*”, “*My relationship to nature is an important part of who I am*” taken from the well-established and validated nature relatedness scale (Nisbet, Zelenski, Murphy, 2009). The items used a 7-point scale, anchored 1 (strongly disagree), 7 (strongly agree). This measure was used as the focal moderator variable.

Participants were then made to peruse some general information about the WWF charity taken from the charity’s website (see appendix 2). This served the purpose of ensuring all respondents were familiar with the charitable cause and the charity’s work and credentials. Participants were subsequently randomly assigned to either the control or intervention advance gratitude condition and exposed to a real WWF charity advertisement that showed the image of an elephant with the catch line “*I am not a trinket*”. The purpose of the advertisement was to garner support against wildlife crime. For the advance gratitude intervention condition the original advertisement was edited to also include the following sentence: “*Thank you in advance for your support*” (see appendix 2).

*Dependent Variables:* After reviewing the advertisement participants were asked to provide data regarding their intention to volunteer for the charity, measured by the following two composite items: “*How likely are you to volunteer with WWF?*”, “*How willing are you to volunteer with WWF?*” Items used a 9-point scale, anchored 1, (not at all), 9, (very much). Finally, participants were administered the attention check and asked to complete demographic measures, before being debriefed as to the purpose of the study.

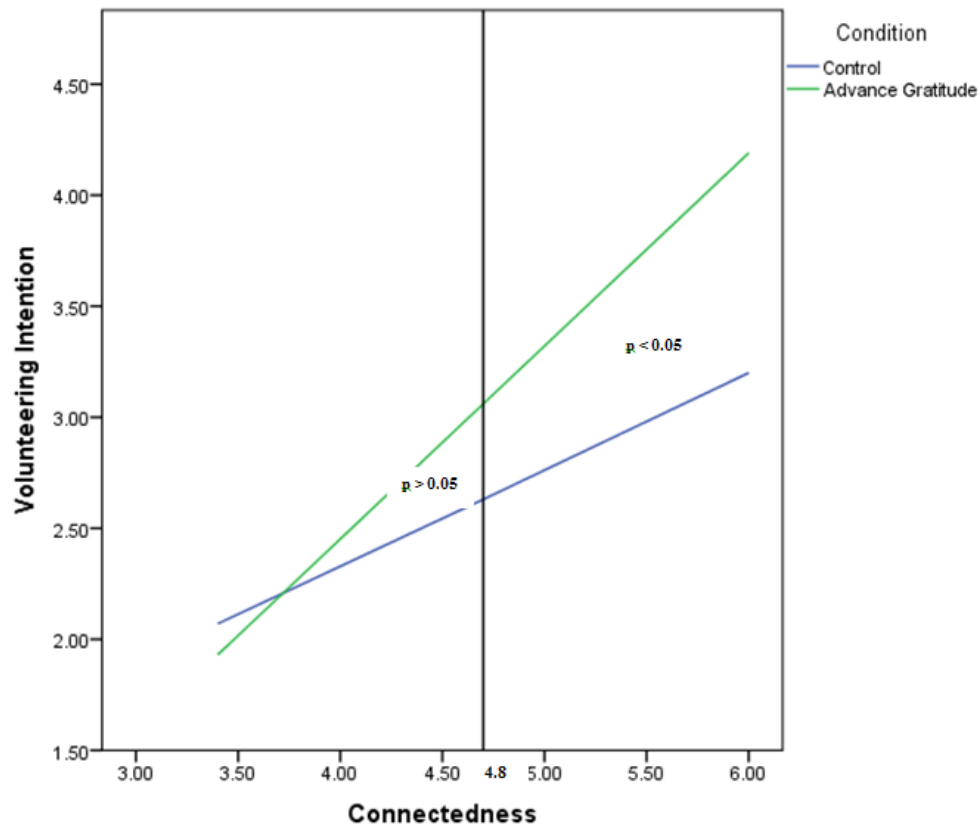
### 3.4.2 Results:

*Dependent Variable- volunteering intention.* The two volunteering intention items showed good reliability and were averaged to form a volunteering intention index ( $r = 0.82$ ). Consistent with the findings from Study 1, participants exposed to the advance gratitude expression expressed stronger prosocial tendencies. A one-way ANOVA with volunteering intention as the dependent variable was significant ( $F(1, 255) = 5.2, p = 0.02$ ). Participants who were exposed to the advance gratitude expression reported a stronger intention to volunteer their time to the charity ( $M = 3.15, SD = 2.13$ ) compared to those in the control condition ( $M = 2.59, SD = 1.81$ ), CI 95% (0.076: 1.054),  $p = 0.02$ . Effect size Cohen's  $d = 0.29$ , Partial Eta Squared = 0.02.

*Covariates:* When the covariates of prior attitude to WWF and frequency volunteering of behaviour are entered into the ANOVA, they record high levels of significance. For attitude ( $F(1, 253) = 36.4, p = 0.00$ ) and for volunteering frequency ( $F(1, 253) = 25.9, p = 0.00$ ), however the dependent variable results remain unaltered and statistically significant; ( $F(1, 253) = 3.9, p < 0.05$ ).

*Moderation Effect of Psychological Connectedness (measured).* Further analysis run using PROCESS model 1 revealed that in addition to a positive main effect there is also a significant gratitude\*connectedness interaction  $F(1, 252) = 6.31, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.02$ . Following on from the interaction effect with a Johnson-Neyman floodlight analysis, it transpires that at very low levels of connectedness with nature (at values of 1 and 1.3 of a 9 point scale), advance gratitude appears to backfire, although the effects  $b = -1.1$ , 95% CI (-2.51; 0.15) and  $b = -1$  only attain  $p$  values of  $p = 0.08$  and  $p = 0.1$  respectively. Yet, from a connectedness value of 4.8 (around the mean value) upwards, the effect of advance gratitude

becomes positive, significant and increasingly strong, ranging from  $b = .44$ , 95% CI (00: .88) at a connectedness level of 4.8 to  $b = 1.40$ , 95% CI (.52: 2.27) at a connectedness level of 7.



**Figure 3.3: Regression lines with Johnson-Neyman Point (floodlight analysis)**

### 3.4.3 Discussion

Mirroring Study 1, Study 2 replicated the field study findings in support of hypothesis 1, by also finding that exposure to advance gratitude expressions results in increased prosocial tendencies towards the cause. Furthermore, Study 2 also added to the generalisability of Study 1 by demonstrating that the main effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour can also hold in the case of a different charitable cause, a more engaging and demanding behavioural outcome such as volunteering and in the case of

an older and more heterogeneous, non-student population. What is also promising from an external validity and practical perspective is that the mere addition of a simple advance gratitude expression to an existing charity advertisement can make a concrete difference in terms of attracting support for the charity.

Importantly, Study 2 also finds support for H3, and sheds further light into the process by showing that psychological connectedness to others moderates the relationship between advance gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour. The more one feels connected to the cause, the more effective advance gratitude expressions become at soliciting assistance from potential donors. Additionally, the study also produces some tentative evidence that when psychological connectedness to a cause is low, trying to solicit volunteer help by expressing advance gratitude could potentially backfire.

From a methodological point of view, some strengths of this experiment were that the key moderator of psychological connectedness to nature was measured before participant exposure to the charity stimuli and before the dependent outcome measure of volunteering intention. The psychological connectedness measure could therefore not have been affected by the advance gratitude manipulation. On the other hand, this study has the limitation that psychological connectedness was measured, rather than manipulated and as such, it could correlate with other unobserved factors (confounds) that produced the observed moderation effect. Study 3 directly addresses this potential issue of internal validity by manipulating psychological connectedness and exploring its impact on prosocial behaviour. Moreover, Study 3 adopts a different operationalisation of psychological connectedness; self-construal.



### 3.5 Study 3- *FamilyWorks shelter charity*

Study 2 provided some preliminary process evidence by measuring the moderating influence of the degree to which people feel psychologically connected to the cause. Seeking additional evidence in favour of my theoretical framework, in Study 3 I sought to reproduce the results of Study 2 using an experimental route. Thus, the principal aim of Study 3 was to test for the theorised moderation effect of connectedness to others by directly manipulating the construct of psychological connectedness. More specifically, and adding to the insights from Study 2, I also aimed to demonstrate that under low levels of psychological connectedness an advance gratitude expression can backfire (H3a), that is, it may induce lower levels of benevolence. For increased generalisability of the findings, in addition to the dependent variable of volunteering intention (2-item measure,  $r = 0.92$ ), already employed in Study 2, I also measured the number of hours people would be willing to volunteer, to gain some indication of the magnitude of the commitment donors may be willing to make. For this, the following 1-item measure was used; *“If asked, how many hours would you be willing to donate to the FamilyWorks food bank next week? Help is needed with packing crates, distributing food to clients, sweeping floors, assisting with offloading deliveries etc.*

I manipulated connectedness to others (and therefore by extension to the beneficiaries), by means of a self-construal manipulation. As noted in chapter 2, self-construal is fundamental to individuals’ cognitive and emotional processing and it captures the degree to which an individual perceives himself or herself connected versus detached from others (Brewer and Gardner, 1996, Dugan and Barash, 2014, Escalas and Bettman, 2005). Deriving predictions from my theorising, I reasoned as follows: given that people with

an interdependent self-construal conceptualise themselves as fundamentally connected to others, towards whom they are attentive (Chiu and Hong, 2007) I predicted that when in an interdependent mindset people should place greater value on social interactions, be more approachable, and therefore be positively responsive to advance gratitude expressions. Advance gratitude expressions should thus be more likely to activate one's moral identity triggering moral awareness that is expected to result in increased prosocial behaviour.

Conversely, individuals marked by an independent self-construal view themselves as separate and autonomous agents (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Such individuals are concerned with separating themselves self from others, and not being influenced by others. I therefore hypothesised that when in an independent mindset advance gratitude expressions could backfire because people will be less amenable to being approached and influenced. Advance gratitude expressions could be regarded as intrusive and manipulative acts, resulting in lower levels of prosocial behaviour.

Finally, because prior research has suggested that one reason why people may donate to a charity is to feel good about themselves; to experience psychological and emotional benefits known as the “warm glow” effect (Andreoni 1990; Kahneman and Knetsch 1992), I sought to examine if this variable could provide a viable alternative explanation to the moral awareness mechanism hypothesised earlier. It is plausible that an advance gratitude expression may make an individual more motivated to donate on the basis that they would experience greater psychological benefits (a stronger “warm glow”) from receiving recognition and knowing that their donation is truly valued. In the case of interdependent mindsets one could expect this effect to hold, (and indeed for it to be even stronger the more

psychologically connected people feel to others). However, in the case of independent mindsets, it is harder to conceive how an advance gratitude expression may make individuals less motivated to donate by making them feel less good about themselves for donating, which is the effect one would need if one were to explain a backfiring effect with “warm glow” as the mediator. Nevertheless, in the interest of academic rigour, (and not to overlook the fact that the warm glow mechanism may still hold for interdependents) I tested for the competing mediation of warm glow.

### ***3.5.1 Sample and Procedure***

The experiment was conducted online via the platform mechanical Turk. Two hundred and twenty US national M-Turkers, mean age 35.5, SD 12.4, 57% female, took part in the 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) x 2 (advance gratitude expression: yes vs. no), between subjects factorial design study. Analysis was conducted on data from two hundred and six participants as 14 (6%) participants were removed from the dataset due to having failed the attention check. All participants were remunerated the going rate of \$ 0.50 for completing the 5 minute study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. In the task description, participants were informed that the study was interested in examining people’s verbal processing style and how it influences information processing. They were told that they would first be asked to complete a measure of their verbal processing and that they would then be reviewing an advertisement.

*Self-construal Manipulation:* Firstly, under the pretence of the verbal processing style study, self-construal was manipulated by asking participants to visualise themselves in a short

story written in either the autonomous first person singular (i.e., I, me, my) or in the inclusive first-person plural form (i.e., we, our, us), while clicking on the relevant pronouns (see appendix 3). Prior research has shown this task to be effective in making people's independent vs. interdependent self-construal more salient regardless of chronic orientations (Garner et al, 1999). All participants then viewed some information about a Seattle based food bank charity called FamilyWorks (appendix 3). This was intended to familiarise participants with the charity's work and credentials.

*Expressed Gratitude Manipulation:* After undergoing the self-construal priming task, and studying some basic information about the charity, participants were then exposed to what was portrayed as an advertisement from the charity. The advertisement requested donations on behalf of the Roberts family (pictured). The stimulus explained that since losing their jobs, the Roberts family had fallen on financial hardship and were struggling to provide for their three children. One version of the advertisement also included the advance gratitude manipulation: *"Thank you in advance for your support from the Roberts Family"* (appendix 3). This was the only difference between the control and intervention (advance gratitude) stimuli. One half of the participants were randomly assigned to the advance gratitude stimulus condition and the remaining half to the control condition.

*Dependent Variables:* After reviewing the FamilyWorks charity advertisement participants reported their volunteering intention (2-items) *"How likely are you to volunteer with FamilyWorks?"* *"How willing are you to volunteer with FamilyWorks"* and the number of hours of their own time, that they would be willing to donate to the charity the following week. For this, the following one item measure was used; *"If asked, how many hours would*

*you be willing to donate to the FamilyWorks food bank next week? Help is needed with packing crates, distributing food to clients, sweeping floors, assisting with offloading deliveries etc.*

*Excluding the Competing Mediating Mechanism, of “Warm Glow”:*

Warm glow was measured by asking participants to express their agreement, on a scale of 1, (strongly disagree), to 7 (strongly agree), with the following two statements,: “*Supporting the FamilyWorks cause would make me feel good*”; “*Donating to FamilyWorks would improve my mood*”. These two items were borrowed from the warm glow scale, employed by Barasch et al (2014). After completing the warm glow measures, participants underwent the attention check and subsequently answered some demographic questions, just prior to being debriefed as to the purpose of the study.

### **3.5.2 Results**

*Volunteering Intention:* The two volunteering intention items showed good reliability ( $r = 0.86$ ) and were averaged to form a volunteering intention index. A two-way ANOVA revealed that the hypothesised disordinal interaction, self-construal\*advance gratitude on volunteering intention was highly significant ( $F(1,202) = 11.04, p = .00$ ). In line with my theorising, the planned contrasts of interest show that in the case of interdependently primed individuals (i.e., when connectedness to others is high), receiving an advance gratitude expression from the beneficiary increases volunteering intention ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 3.9, SD = 2.28$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.2, SD = 2.48, 95\% \text{ CI } (.34: 2.12), F(1,202) = 7.5, p = 0.01, d = .54$ ). In contrast, when psychological connectedness to others is low (i.e., when an independent self-construal is primed) an advance gratitude expression can backfire and result in a reduction of

one's willingness to assist with the cause ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 5.6$ ,  $SD = 1.90$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.7$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ , 95% CI (00: 1.79),  $F(1,202) = 3.9$   $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = -.42$  ).

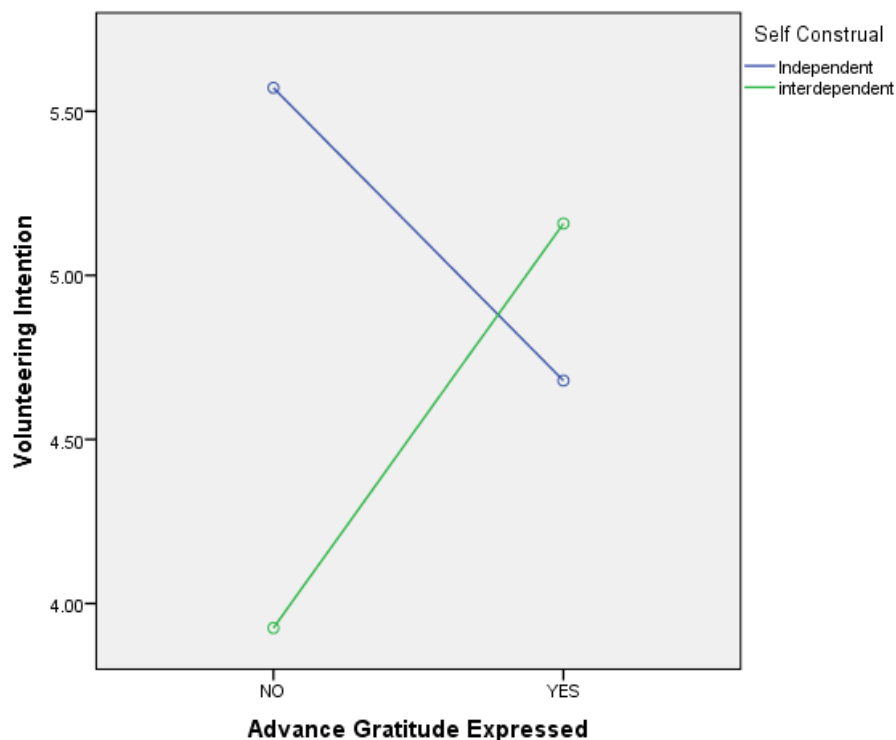
*Number of Hours Donated:* The data underwent a square root transformation to correct for skewness<sup>4</sup>. The results from a two-way ANOVA largely mirror those obtained for the dependent variable volunteering intention. There is no main effect of neither gratitude,  $F(1,202) = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.86$  nor of self-construal  $F(1,202) = 0.1$ ,  $p = 0.75$  on the number of hours participants are willing to volunteer to the charity. However, as predicted the interaction self-construal\*advance gratitude is disordinal and significant  $F(1,202) = 6.8$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . The planned contrasts reveal that an advance gratitude expression leads to an increase in the number of hours one is willing to volunteer to the cause in the case of individuals who are primed with an interdependent mindset ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 1.33$ ,  $SD = .97$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 1.74$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ,  $F(1,202) = 3.9$ , 95% CI (.001: .83),  $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = .36$ ). Whereas, the opposite result is observed for independents ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 1.77$ ,  $SD = .78$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ , 95% CI (-.78: .06),  $F(1,202) = 2.9$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ,  $d = -.38$ . Therefore across two outcome measures H3b is firmly supported and H3a is partly supported.

*Moderated Mediation Analysis for "Warm Glow"*- The two warm glow scale items showed good reliability and were averaged to form a warm glow index ( $r = .73$ ). A moderated mediation analysis was conducted to test the conditional indirect effect of warm glow on volunteering when moderated by self-construal. Using Hayes (2013), Process model 7, I tested the path gratitude\*self-construal > warm glow > volunteering intention. The output revealed that the overall model did not reach statistical significance  $F(3,202) = 0.77$ , the

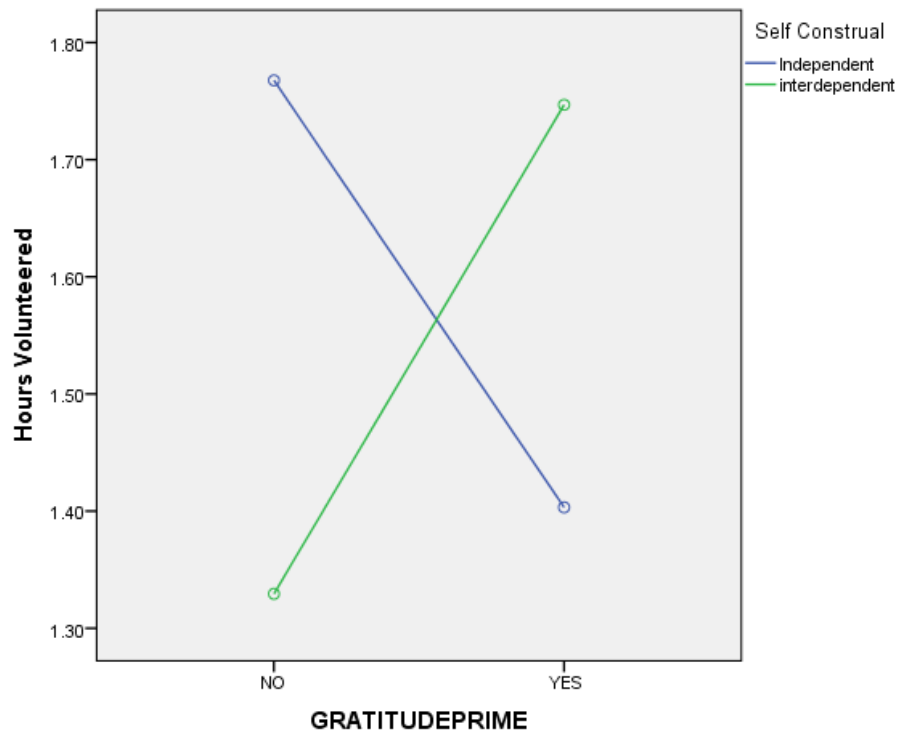
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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that even in its raw form the data produces a significant, disordinal, gratitude x self-construal interaction,  $p = 0.45$ . The planned contrast for interdependents is significant,  $p = 0.02$  but the independents contrast is not  $p = 0.58$ .

effect of advance gratitude expressions on volunteering intention was therefore not mediated by warm glow. A more detailed inspection of the standardised regression coefficient reveals that neither pathway is significant. When connectedness is low (independent self-construal condition) ( $b = -0.17$ ,  $C_{95} .068, 0.34$ ) and when connectedness is high (interdependent self-construal condition) ( $b = 0.21$ ,  $C_{95} .0.3, 0.72$ ), thus in both instances the indirect effects were not statistically different from zero as indicated by the 95% bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals that include zero. I then ran the same analysis with hours donated as the dependent variable and obtained the same statistically insignificant results. Across two different dependent measures, I therefore found no evidence in support of the alternative mediating mechanism of warm glow.



**Figure 3.4 – Pattern of volunteering intention according to self-construal and advanced expressed gratitude**



**Figure 3.5 – Pattern of number of hours volunteered (square root transformed) to self-construal and advanced expressed gratitude**

### ***3.5.3 Discussion***

By means of the more rigorous experimental route, the findings from Study 3 replicate those of Study 2. Through the direct manipulation of self-construal, Study 3 provides more conclusive evidence in support of my theoretical framework and the hypothesised role of psychological connectedness as a moderator of the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour. The findings confirm that when psychological connectedness to others is high, (i.e. when an interdependent mindset is primed) advance gratitude expressions result in an increased willingness to provide support for others. I find that the effects hold across two important measures of prosocial behaviour: volunteering intention and the amount of time people are willing to volunteer.



Conversely however, under conditions of low psychological connectedness to others (i.e. when an independent mindset is induced) the effect of an advanced gratitude expression on prosocial intention can be negative. Furthermore, Study 3 also served the additional purpose of excluding warm glow as a competing explanation to moral awareness for the indirect effects of an advance gratitude expression of prosocial behaviour. No evidence was found in favour of the claim that warm glow mediates either of the two indirect paths to prosocial behaviour. Hence, warm glow appears to be an unlikely explanation for the reported effects.

Although the findings from Study 3 support the conceptual model, one possible limitation should be noted. The manipulation of advance gratitude employed also included a direct reference to the Roberts Family “*Thank you in advance for your support **from the Roberts family***”. While I would argue that it is a perfectly ecological way of expressing gratitude, when compared to a control condition with nothing, one could raise concerns of internal validity. A more theoretically appropriate control could have been a tagline with simply “*The Roberts Family*”.

That said, in defense of the findings, one should first note that Study 2 already found support for the moderation effect with a manipulation of advance gratitude that did include a reference to the beneficiary. Second, if one studies the stimuli from Study 3 it is evident that the “Roberts Family” is referred to repetitively in the advertisement text and a picture of the family is also included. It is therefore unlikely that the inclusion of the tagline “The Roberts Family” at the top of the stimulus would bring much added salience. Finally and most

importantly Study 8 uses a control condition that includes a reference of the beneficiary and so directly addresses any concerns one may have with the present study.

### ***3.6. Study 4- Cause Related Marketing, Aquavita Bottled Water and Polio Charity***

By means of an experimental route, Study 3 produced important evidence in support of the conceptual framework with respect to the moderating role of psychological connectedness, on the relationship between advanced gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour. Building on this, the purpose of Study 4 was twofold; firstly to replicate this theoretically important finding, in a more controlled laboratory setting, while using the same operationalisation of connectedness to others (self-construal) and manipulation as in Study 3. Second, looking to go beyond prosocial behaviour in the form of charitable donations, I sought to test the effect of advance gratitude expressions in the more commercial marketing context of cause related marketing.

Cause related marketing (CRM) can be understood as a marketing strategy whereby businesses join with charities or causes to market a product or service for mutual benefit (Aradhna, 2011). This commonly involves firms contributing a portion of their revenue or profits to the charity or cause through the sale of its products or services (Brown and Dacin 1997; Ellen et al. 2000). CRM is one of the most widespread, topical and rapidly growing global trends in marketing practice (CIM, 2017; Prosepad, 2017) and as cause-related marketing becomes more diffused, it is becoming increasingly important for companies to understand how to best implement their strategies.

Extant research has examined which characteristics of CRM initiatives result in more positive consumer responses, but it has focused almost exclusively on the study of cognitive factors, in particular, the notion of “fit” (the relatedness, similarity or affinity that is perceived to exist between the company/brand and the cause/charity) (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Rifon, Choi, Trimble & Li, 2004; Ellen, Webb & Mohr, 2006; Barone, Nirman & Miyazaki, 2007; Nan Heo, 2007; Alcaniz, Caceres and Perez, 2010; Vlachos and Tsamakos, 2011; Kuo and Rice, 2014). What has been almost entirely overlooked is the role that can be played by emotions (Kim and Johnson, 2012), how for instance including an expression of emotion in CRM communications may influence consumer responses to those initiatives. Therefore, given the popularity of CRM, the recognised need to approach the CRM phenomena through new perspectives and that the purchase of a CRM product has been equated to a moral act, in as far as it is a behaviour that is socially responsive to the needs of others (Kim and Johnson, 2012) the CRM context seems to be a well suited commercial setting for the testing of advance gratitude expressions.

Analogously to Study 3, I hypothesised that when primed to be in an interdependent mindset, the high levels of psychological connectedness to others should make individuals positively responsive to advance gratitude expressions. Under conditions of greater psychological connectedness, exposure to an advance gratitude expression is more likely to awaken the individual’s sleepy moral self and as a result, increase prosocial inclinations. On the other hand, when an independent mindset is induced, I anticipated that advance gratitude expressions could backfire. This is because when psychological connectedness to others is low, people may seek to maintain their distance from others and may therefore also be less open to being solicited for help. In this case, an advance gratitude expression could be regarded as an intrusive and calculating action. That is, the recipient of the gratitude

expression will be even less inclined and likely to recognise the virtuous moral nature of the request, resulting in a backfiring effect.

### ***3.6.1 Sample and Procedure***

One hundred and sixty-eight undergraduate students from the University of British Columbia, mean age 20, SD 1.4, 54.2% female, took part in the laboratory study in exchange for course credits. They were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (self-construal: independent vs. interdependent) x 2 (advance gratitude expression: yes vs. no), between subjects factorial design. All participants passed the attention check and were thus included in the subsequent analyses. Upon arrival to the lab, participants were informed that they would be taking part in two unrelated studies. In the first study they would be completing a measure of their verbal processing style and in the second study they would be reviewing a product advertisement. Thus, under the pretence of the verbal processing style study, self-construal was first manipulated following the same procedure as in Study 3.

Participants were then shown one of two advertisements for an Aquavita branded bottle of water, which either contained the following advance gratitude expression or it did not: *“On behalf of all children at risk, thank you in advance for choosing to support the fight against polio. We are truly grateful”*. In addition to illustrating basic product information and product image, both advertisements featured the picture of an African child receiving a vaccination. The text explained that polio is a debilitating disease still affecting parts of the developing world and that Aquavita was in partnership with the End of Polio charity for the eradication of polio. It was explained that with every purchase of bottled water, Aquavita would contribute to the cost of vaccinating a child (see appendix 4).

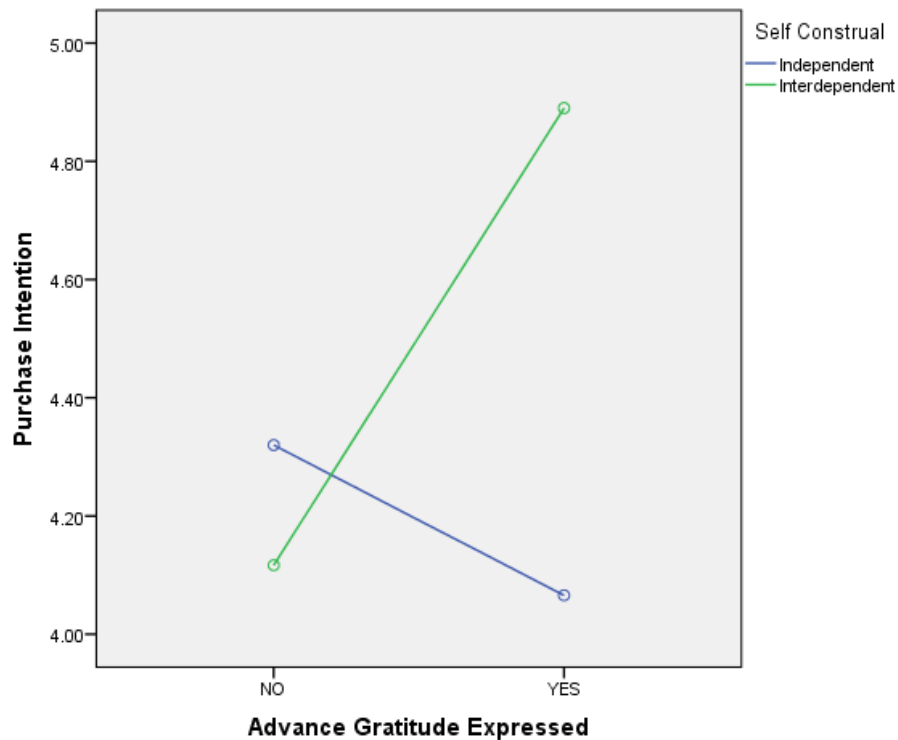
*Advance Gratitude Manipulation Check:* After reviewing the advertisement at their leisure, participants completed the following two statements ( $r = 0.85$ ) that indicated their perceived level of expressed gratitude in the advertisement, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree): “*On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel gratitude was expressed*” “*On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel thanks was expressed*”. These items were adapted from the Grant and Gino (2011) expressed gratitude manipulation check and in line with the study procedure adopted by Grant and Gino, I administer the manipulation check before measuring the dependent variable. I must however recognise that this could result in demand effects and/or in unduly strengthening the effects of the manipulation, because the presence or absence of expressed gratitude in the stimuli could be made more salient to participants by administering the check. In turn, this would then affect the dependent variable measure. To account for this possibility, in subsequent studies I administer the manipulation check after the main dependent variable. I do not find that the order affects the results.

*Dependent Variable:* Participants reported their product purchase intention (2-items) by answering the following two questions: “*Should the occasion arise in the future, how likely is it that you would purchase “Aquavita” bottled water?*” “*If you were looking to buy a bottle of water, how likely is it that you would choose “Aquavita”?*” A 7-point scale anchored 1 (very unlikely), 7 (very likely) was used.

### 3.6.2 Results

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation Check:* A two-way ANOVA with expressed gratitude as the dependent variable was significant  $F(1, 164) = 12, p = 0.00$ . As expected, participants in the advance gratitude condition compared to the control, reported higher levels of expressed gratitude from the advertisement ( $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.1, SD = 1.21$  vs.  $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 3.9, SD = 1.38, F(1, 164) = 36, p = 0.00$ .) There was no main effect for self-construal  $F(1, 164) = 0.78, p = 0.38$ ) nor any evidence of a self-construal\* gratitude interaction  $F(1, 164) = 0.2, p = 0.9$ ).

*Purchase Intention:* A two-way ANOVA produced no main effect of gratitude  $F(1,164) = 1.39, p = 0.24$ , nor of self-construal  $F(1,164) = 1.99, p = 0.16$  on purchase intention. However pertinent to my theorising, there was a significant self-construal\* gratitude interaction,  $F(1,164) = 5.45, p = 0.02$ . A simple main effect analysis revealed that in the case of interdependently primed individuals, expressing advance gratitude increased reported purchase intention, ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.11, SD = 1.57$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.89, SD = 1.07, F(1,164) = 5.77, p = 0.02, d = .58$ ). As for independently primed participants, although the effect was not significant, ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.32, SD = 1.48, \text{ vs } M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.07, SD = 1.51, F(1,164) = 0.72, p = 0.4, d = -.17$ ) it was in the predicted direction, that is to say, participants expressed somewhat less desire to purchase the bottled water when thanked in advance.



**Figure 3.6 Pattern of purchase intention according to self-construal and advance expressed gratitude**

### 3.6.3 Discussion

In a more controlled laboratory setting and using the more commercial context of cause related marketing, Study 4 on the whole, finds further evidence in support of my theoretical framework with particular respect to the moderating role played by psychological connectedness in the relationship between advanced gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour. The results from Study 4 demonstrate that when psychological connectedness to others is high, embedding an advance gratitude expression in a cause related marketing product advertisement can make consumers more inclined to purchase the product.

Although the observed effect was directional, the study did not find significant evidence in support of the notion that when psychological connectedness to others is low (i.e. when consumers are in an independent mindset) advance gratitude expressions make individuals less inclined to purchase a cause related marketing product. I speculate that the lack of statistical significance compared to that found in Study 3, may be due to the particular nature of cause related marketing purchases, in as far as a CRM purchase is not an entirely altruistic, prosocial act. Consumers could also possess selfish reasons for wanting to purchase the product and these could be working against the backfiring effect caused by the advance gratitude expressions on prosocial motivations.

Therefore in sum, while the findings from Study 4 support H3b only, they do demonstrate that that my framework extends beyond charitable organizations and the benefits of advance gratitude expressions can also extend to more commercial marketing settings, potentially resulting in win-win scenarios for both the charity and company. The study outcomes also tentatively suggest that firms, compared to charities, should perhaps be less concerned about the potential backfiring effects of advance gratitude expressions as these could be partly mitigated by the consumer's egoistic motivations for wanting to purchase the product.

### ***3.7 Study 5- Cause Related Marketing for Aquavita bottled water and the Polio charity with in-text manipulation of self-construal***

Although Studies 3 and 4 both benefited from high construct validity through the use of validated and rigorous laboratory style word exercises to manipulate psychological connectedness, this is not a practice that can be employed by marketers in the real world. In Study 5, I therefore sought to see if self-construal could be manipulated through the text stimuli and produce comparable outcomes to studies 3 and 4. For this, I adapted the in-text



self-construal manipulations employed by White and Simpson (2013). Following from the framework previously described my predictions and theoretical basis remain the same as those detailed in Studies 3 and 4.

### ***3.7.1 Sample and Procedure***

One hundred and ninety M-Turkers of US nationality were recruited to take part in this 2 (self-construal: interdependent vs. independent) x 2 (advance expressed gratitude: yes vs. no) between subjects factorial design study. 9 participants failed the attention check, leaving an effective sample of  $n = 181$ . Mean age of participants 30, SD 10.1, 56% male. The basic context, product type (Aquavita bottled water), beneficiaries (African children) and charitable cause (End of Polio charity) were essentially the same as in Study 4. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and were exposed to one version of the advertisements (see appendix 5 for an example stimulus).

*Self-construal Manipulation-* As alluded to earlier, self-construal theory ascertains that selves can be viewed as more bounded, separate, and individualistic (independent self-construal) or more interconnected and collectivistic (interdependent self-construal) and while the relative degree to which a person defines the self at the level of the independent self or at the level of interdependent self (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Singelis 1994) can vary significantly from person to person, people are nevertheless somewhat flexible in their construal of the self. As a result, it is possible for some specific contexts to activate more independent-level aspects of the self, whereas others can activate interdependent-level self aspects (Gardner, Gabriel, and Lee 1999, White and Simpson, 2013).

Consistent with such theorising, in this study, self-construal was manipulated in the advertisement's text with the following messages: for the interdependent condition: *"For every purchase of bottled water we make, Aquavita will vaccinate a child. As a community we can take part and feel good about ourselves."* For the independent condition: *"For every purchase of bottled water you make, Aquavita will vaccinate a child. As an individual you can take part and feel good about yourself."* Therefore, as can be observed from the above, in keeping with previous work by White and Simpson (2013) I manipulated the interdependent self by using the third person, collective level pronouns "we, ourselves" and by evoking interdependence through the notion of belonging to a community. Correspondingly, the independent self was manipulated by focusing on the first person singular, independent pronouns "you, yourself" and by evoking the notion of the individual.

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation:* Advance gratitude was expressed with the addition of the following sentence: *"On behalf of all children at risk, thank you in advance for choosing to support the fight against polio. We are truly grateful."* This is the same expression as the one employed in Study 4.

*Dependent Measure- purchase intention:* Following exposure to the advertisement, participants reported their purchase intention for the Aquavita bottled water by responding to the following 3 items on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much): *"How inclined are you to purchase Aquavita bottled water?" "How likely are you to purchase Aquavita bottled water?" "How willing are you to purchase Aquavita bottled water?"*  $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Expressed Gratitude Manipulation Check:* Following the collection of data for the dependent measures, participants were also subjected to a manipulation check for expressed

gratitude, comprised of 2-items. These were adapted from Grant and Gino (2011) and participants responded on a scale of 1 (not at all), 9 (an extreme amount). *“On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel gratitude was expressed”* *On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel thanks was expressed”*

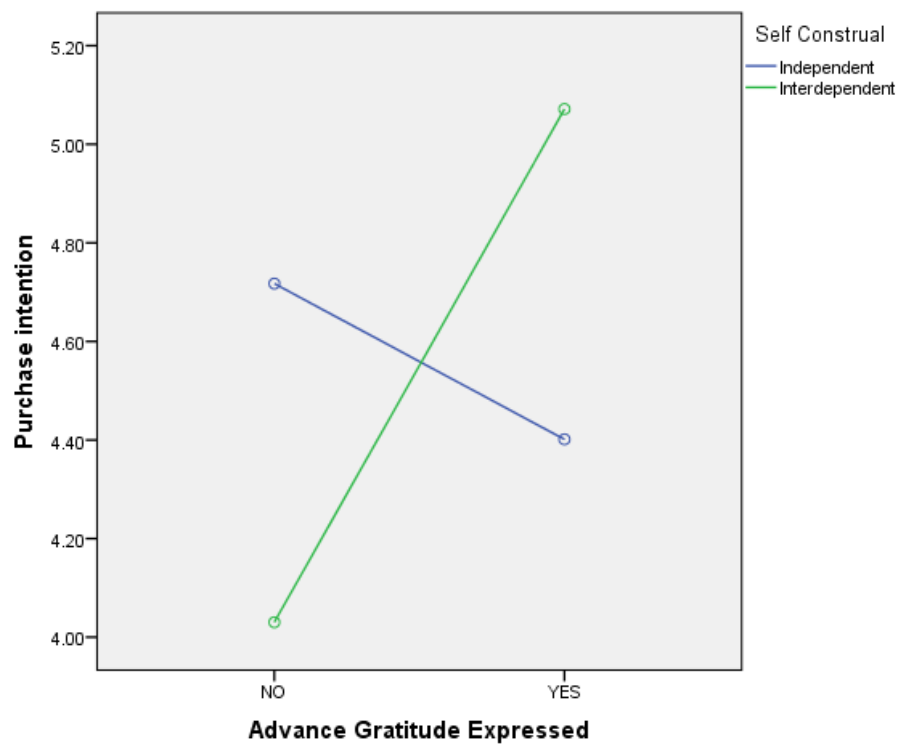
Finally, participants completed the instructional attention check and demographic measures.

### **3.7.2 Results**

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation Check:* The two expressed gratitude items showed good reliability and were averaged to form an expressed gratitude index ( $r = .93$ ). The manipulation check revealed that participants in the gratitude conditions (compared to the controls) recognised that the advertisement expressed more gratitude. An ANOVA produced a significant main effect for gratitude ( $M_{\text{ExpressedGratitude}} = 4.2$ ,  $SD = 1.62$  vs.  $M_{\text{NoExpressedGratitude}} = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ,  $F(1,177) = 6.9$ ,  $p = .00$ )

*Purchase Intention:* A two-way analysis of variance revealed no main effect of gratitude  $F(1,177) = 1.7$ ,  $p = 0.19$ , nor of self-construal  $F(1,177) = 0.006$ ,  $p = 0.94$  on purchase intention. However, as hypothesised the interaction self-construal\*gratitude was significant  $F(1,177) = 7.7$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . Simple main effects analysis revealed that in the case of interdependently primed individuals, advance gratitude significantly increased reported purchase intention, ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.72$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.1$   $SD = 1.51$ ,  $F(1,177) = 8.0$ , 95% CI (.34: 1.75),  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.68$ ). As for independently primed participants, although

the effect was not significant, ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.7$ ,  $SD = 1.54$  vs  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 1.8$ ,  $F(1,177) = 0.87$   $p = 0.3$ ,  $d = -.18$ , it was again in the predicted direction, that is to say, participants appeared to express less desire to purchase the bottled water when thanked in advance.



**Figure 3.7 Pattern of purchase intention according to self-construal and advance expressed gratitude**

### **3.7.3 Discussion**

By means of an in-text manipulation of self-construal (integral manipulation), Study 5 provides greater external validity while replicating the results of Study 4, and offers additional evidence in favour of the moderating role played by psychological connectedness on the relationship between advance gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour. The study

also importantly confirms that the effectiveness of advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal can extend beyond the realm of charitable organisations, to the more commercial marketing setting of cause related marketing. The results from Study 5 demonstrate that when psychological connectedness to others is high, the effectiveness of cause related marketing initiatives measured in terms of increased purchase intentions can be improved by the simple inclusion of an advance gratitude expression. Thus the evidence put forth in this experiment further supports H3b. Although the effect was again directional, H3a was not supported in this specific context of cause related marketing. I reiterate that this may be because a CRM purchase is unlikely to be solely motivated by altruistic considerations. Consumers could thus also partly possess egoistic reasons for wanting to acquire the product and these could be tempering the unfavourable effects caused by the advance gratitude expressions on prosocial motivations. It is therefore quite possible that for the hypothesised backfiring effect (H3a) the study lacked statistical power.

### **3.8. Study 6- Prostate and Breast Cancer Charity Sponsored Pen**

Collectively, the moderation evidence produced by Studies 2-5 expand our understanding of when and how donors' psychological connectedness to the cause and advance gratitude expressions interact to shape donors' prosocial inclinations. In the interest of generalisability and to further examine the robustness of my theoretical framework in Study 6 I employ a different operationalisation and manipulation of the construct of psychological connectedness.

Following manipulations of psychological connectedness via self-construal (studies 3-5), which is a form of social identity that reflects a person's general disposition to feel

connected or not to others, Study 6 manipulates psychological connectedness to the cause by manipulating a more specific form of social identity; a cause related identity, based on gender (Winterich and Barone, 2011). As alluded to earlier, connection to others can occur through a process of social identification (Oyserman, 2009). The literature on identity activation has amply demonstrated that social identities can be highly diagnostic of decision making, to the extent that a particular social identity is relevant to the decision at hand and important to the self (Deshpande and Stayman, 1994; Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Reed, 2004). Gender is a well-established dimension of social identity in the psychological literature and for most people it is also an important part of their self-schemata (Bem, 1981; Frable, 1989, Shang et al, 2008). From an execution perspective, gender is also a dimension of social identity that is easily identifiable (Cialdini, 2001).

When the identity dimension of a potential donor and that of potential beneficiaries are congruent, the potential donor is likely to categorise him/herself along that dimension (Reed, 2002; Reed, 2004; Shang et al, 2008) and this identity congruency effect is expected to result in a high level of psychological connectedness (Liviatan, Trope and Liberman, 2008; Ein-Gar and Levontin, 2013). Following this logic, I manipulate psychological connectedness to the cause by making the charitable cause gender specific so that it either “matches” or “mismatches” the gender of the potential donor. It thus stands to reason that when the gender specific nature of the cause matches that of the potential donor, psychological connectedness will be high and exposure to advance gratitude expressions should result in greater charitableness. Conversely, when the gender specific nature of the cause does not match the gender of the prospective benefactor, the potential donor’s psychological connectedness to the cause will be low and advance gratitude expressions could result in reduced levels of prosociality.

A second goal of Study 6 was to obtain further evidence in support of the proposed mediating mechanism of moral awareness. While Study 1 provided evidence of the underlying mechanism at work, the model that was tested was incomplete in as far as it lacked the moderator of psychological connectedness to the cause. Study 6 thus to replicate and extend the mediational findings from Study 1 by testing the complete hypothesised model (see fig. 2.1) for the conditional indirect effects of advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour, under different levels of psychological connectedness (high vs low). In line with the theoretical argumentations previously noted in chapter 2, I hypothesise that when psychological connectedness to others is high and an individual feels connected and willing to engage with the cause, advance gratitude expressions will be well received and will activate one's moral identity. This increased moral awareness will in turn result in increased prosocial intent. Conversely however, when psychological connectedness is low, and the individual is not so willing to engage with the appeal, it becomes more likely that an advance gratitude expression will be perceived as an intrusive and manipulative marketing gesture as opposed to a sincere expression of appreciation for supporting a genuine charitable cause. Consequently, the moral significance of supporting the cause will not be recognised, and this reduced moral awareness will in turn translate into lower levels of prosocial intent.

### ***3.8.1 Sample and Procedure***

To test the above predictions, I sought to recruit four hundred and seventy UK nationals via the market research company Bilendi, to participate in a five-minute online study of “product advertisements”. Forty one participants (8.7%) were removed from the dataset for having failed the attention check. This reduced the sample size to four hundred

and twenty-nine; age range of participants, 18-81 years, mean age 39, SD 16.7, 55.5% males. For each participant, Bilendi charged the going rate of 50p. Participants were however incentivised by means of “loyalty points” which they could then redeem by making online purchases. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions, in this 2 (Gender matching charitable cause: Yes vs. No) x 2 (Advance gratitude: Yes vs. No) between subjects factorial design study.

*Gender and Charitable Cause Matching/Mismatching Manipulation:* Participants were first asked to study a product advertisement showing either a Prostate Cancer UK charity or a Susan G Komen UK (breast cancer) charity sponsored pen. The stimuli in addition to showing the picture and price (£2) of the pen also provided some basic information about the respective type of cancer and charity and included a gender relevant image of a cancer sufferer. Information relating to the rate of diffusion of the cancers among the UK population was factually correct and remained constant across conditions (UK breast cancer and prostate cancer rates of incidence are in fact comparable). The images used for the pens were those of authentic “Prostate Cancer UK” and “Susan G Komen UK” charity endorsed pens, available for purchase to the general public (see appendix 6). For the purposes of analysis, the match (high psychological connectedness) condition was comprised of males who were exposed to the Prostate Cancer advertisement and of females who were exposed to the Susan G Komen (UK) breast cancer advertisement. In other words, the gender/charity identity congruent conditions were collapsed across gender, to form a single “match” (high psychological connectedness) condition. By the same token, the “mismatch” (low psychological connectedness) condition was composed of females who had been exposed to the Prostate Cancer advertisement and of males who had viewed the Susan G Komen breast cancer advertisement. The gender of the participants was obtained as part of the demographic



data collection at the end of the study and used to determine gender/charitable cause matching.

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation:* At random, half of the participants were exposed to a version of the advertisements that also contained the advance gratitude expression. The expression was framed as coming from the cancer suffer depicted in the advertisement and depending on the charity, Prostate Cancer (UK)/Susan G Komen (UK) it read. “*On behalf of Peter/Laura and all cancer sufferers like him/her, thank you in advance for your support*”. (See appendix 6).

*Mediator Moral Awareness:* After viewing the advertisement, moral awareness was measured with the following three items; “*I think of the purchase of the pen as a purchase that has moral implications*”, “*Buying the pen is the "right thing" to do*” and “*There are very important ethical and moral aspects to purchasing this pen*” ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), anchored 1 (not at all), 9 (very much).

*Dependent Measure: purchase intention:* participants reported their purchase intention for the charity sponsored pen by responding to the following 2-items ( $r = 0.88$ ): “*How likely are you to purchase the pen?*” “*How willing are you to purchase the pen?*” on 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much) scales. In the stimuli, it was made clear that all proceeds from the sale of the pen would be destined for the charitable cause.

*Psychological Connectedness Manipulation Check:* to ensure that the gender/charitable cause matching/mismatching manipulation effected psychological connectedness to the cause in the hypothesised manner, participants were subjected to one of the following

manipulation checks depending on which charity advertisement condition they were randomly assigned to: “*I feel a personal connection to the Susan G Komen UK cause*” or “*I feel a personal connection to the Prostate Cancer UK cause*”. 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation Check:* Participants responded to the following two statements ( $r = 0.91$ ) that were intended to capture their perceived level of expressed gratitude in the advertisements, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree): “*On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel gratitude was expressed*” *On the basis of the information provided in the advertisement please state the extent to which you feel thanks was expressed*”.

To conclude the experiment, participants answered the attention check item and provided demographic measures before being debriefed to the purpose of the study.

To reiterate, I hypothesised that an advance gratitude expression would result in an increased purchase intention for the charity sponsored pen under gender/charity identity match conditions (when psychological connectedness to the cause is high) but that the opposite would apply when the gender specific nature of the charitable cause did not match that of the donor (when psychological connectedness to the cause is low).

### **3.8.2 Results**

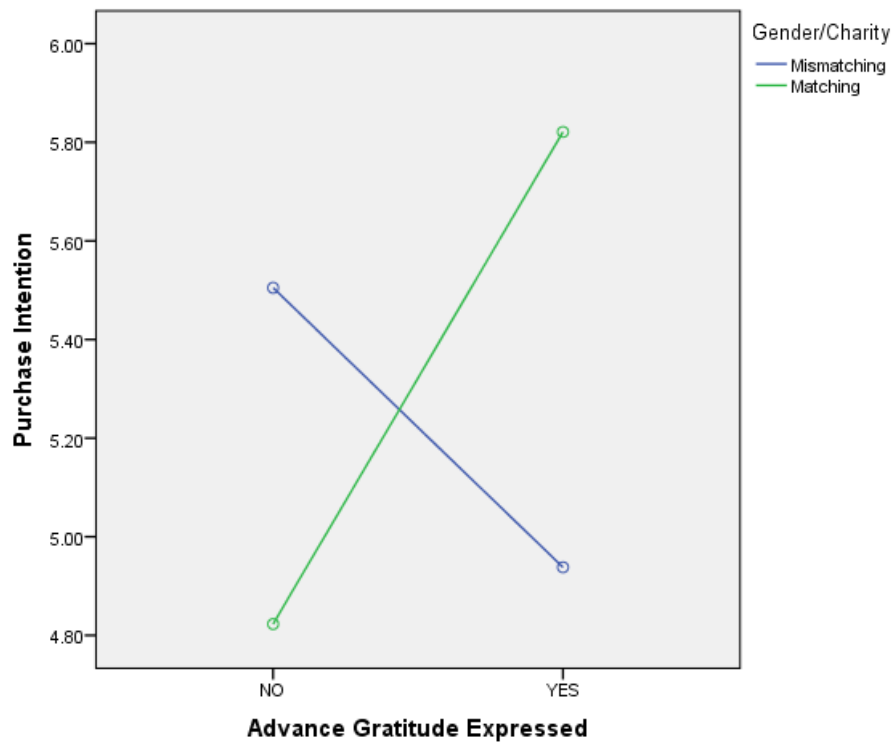
*Psychological Connectedness Manipulation Check:* The manipulation checks confirmed that the gender/ charitable cause matching/mismatching manipulations effected

psychological connectedness to the cause in the hypothesised manner. A match x advance gratitude expression analysis of variance (ANOVA) on connectedness to the cause confirmed that only a main effect emerged for connectedness,  $F(1, 425) = 3.7, p = 0.054$  with those in the “match” condition reporting a greater psychological connectedness to the cause than those in the “mismatch” condition ( $M = 4.0$  vs.  $M = 3.8$ ).

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation Check:* The two expressed gratitude items showed good reliability and were averaged to form an expressed gratitude index ( $r = .92$ ). The manipulation check revealed that on average, participants in the gratitude conditions (compared to the controls) recognised that the advertisement expressed more gratitude. An ANOVA produced a significant main effect for gratitude ( $M_{\text{ExpressedGratitude}} = 5$  vs.  $M_{\text{NoExpressedGratitude}} = 4.6$ ;  $F(1,425) = 7.6, p = .00$ ). No main effect of “match” ( $M_{\text{match}} = 4.8$  vs.  $M_{\text{mismatch}} = 4.8$ ;  $F < 1$ , NS), and no interaction emerged,  $F(1, 425) = 1.1$ , NS.

*Dependent Measure: purchase intention:* A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) produced no main effects. On average, participants in the “match” condition did not express more nor less willingness to purchase the charity sponsored pen than those in the “mismatch” condition ( $M_{\text{match}} = 5.3$  vs.  $M_{\text{mismatch}} = 5.2, p = 0.68$ ). Similarly, on average, participants exposed to an advance gratitude expression were neither more nor less likely to buy the pen ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 5.2$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.4, p = .38$ ). However, most critical to testing my framework, I again observed a significant two-way disordinal interaction of advance gratitude\*gender matching on purchase intention ( $F(1, 425) = 10.3, p = .00$ ). As anticipated, planned contrasts revealed that when the charitable cause matches the gender of the donor, advance gratitude expressions result in increased purchase intention for the charity sponsored product ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.8, SD = 2.57$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.8, SD = 2.54$ ),  $F(1,425) = 8.7, 95\% \text{ CI } (.33;1.67), p = .00, d = .40$ . On the other hand however, and also as theorised, when advance

gratitude expressions are embedded in a gender incongruent charitable appeal the effect backfires, resulting in decreased levels of purchase intention for the charity endorsed product, although the effect was only marginally significant ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 5.5$ ,  $SD = 2.50$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.9$ ,  $SD = 2.55$ ),  $F(1,425) = 2.6$ , 95% CI (-1.26: .12)  $p = 0.1$ ,  $d = -.24$ . See figure 3.8.



**Figure 3.8: The effects of gender/charity matching and advance gratitude on purchase intentions of a charity sponsored product**

*Moderated Mediation Analysis* : The significance of the conditional indirect effects of advance gratitude expressions on moral awareness, on purchase intention at different levels of psychological connectedness (high vs low) were tested using a Hayes(2013) PROCESS macro, bootstrapping analysis, 10,000 iterations, model 7 (advance gratitude\*psychological connectedness> moral awareness> purchase intention). The output of the standardised

regression coefficients revealed that both pathways are significant, and in the predicted direction. When connectedness is low (low match condition), ( $b = -.4059$ ,  $C_{95}: -0.7882, -0.380$ ) and when connectedness is high (high match condition) ( $b = 0.5158$ ,  $C_{95}: 0.1234, 0.9105$ ), in both instances the indirect effects were statistically different from zero as indicated by the 95% bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals that do not include zero. The above indirect effects fully accounted for the effects of gratitude on purchase intention (full mediation), as there was no direct effect of advance gratitude on purchase intention; ( $b = 0.1718$ ,  $C_{95}: -0.2280, 0.5716$ ).

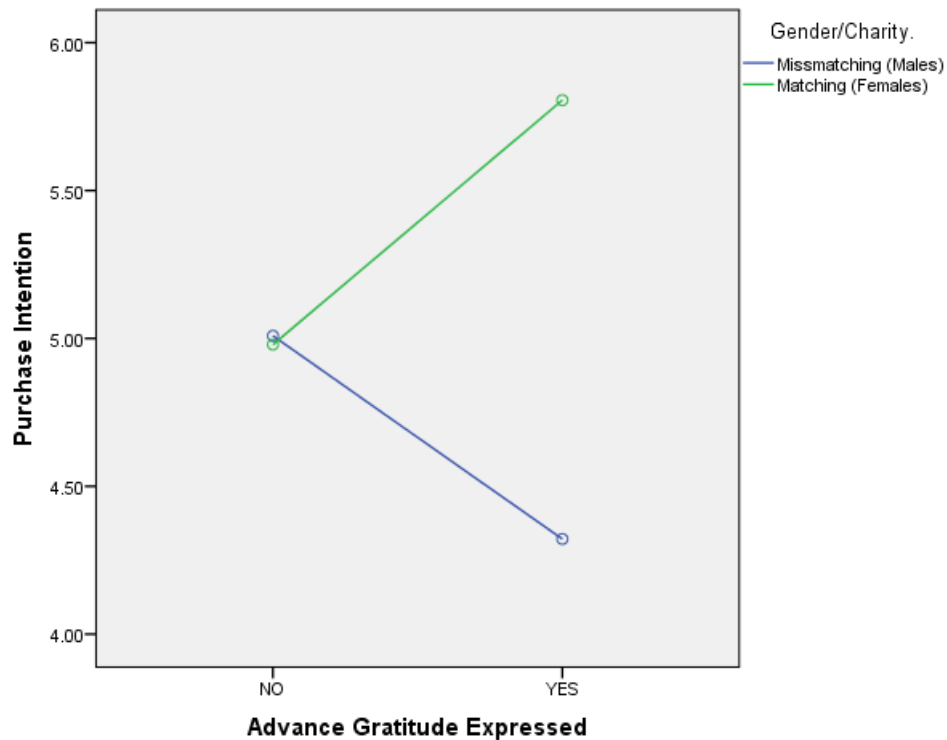
### **3.8.3 Discussion**

Study 6 set out to achieve two primary goals: first, to assess the robustness and generalisability of the findings of Studies 2-5, by employing a different operationalisation and manipulation of the construct of psychological connectedness. The pattern of results observed provides further compelling evidence in support of the hypothesised moderation effect of psychological connectedness to the cause, on the relationship between advanced gratitude expressions and prosocial inclination (H3). More specifically, the study's findings add credence to the premise that when psychological connectedness to a cause is high, advance gratitude expressions exert a positive effect on prosocial inclinations (H3b). Additionally, the study also suggests that when a donor's psychological connectedness to a cause is low, advance gratitude expressions could have an undesirable effect and lead to a reduction in charitable intent (H3a). The second goal of Study 6 was to test for the conditional indirect effects of advance gratitude expressions on purchase intention via moral awareness at different levels of psychological connectedness to the cause (high vs low), thereby testing the empirical validity of my complete theoretical framework. The findings are

fully supportive of my model and confirm that when psychological connectedness to the cause is high, the positive effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosociality stems from an increase in moral awareness. On the other hand, when psychological connectedness to the cause is low, the fall in prosocial intent that is induced by an advance gratitude expression is because of a fall in moral awareness. H4a and H4b are thus confirmed.

While Study 6 certainly further cements our understanding of how advance gratitude and psychological connectedness to a cause interact to shape prosocial motivations, it should be noted that the backfiring effect in support of H3a, was only “marginally” significance,  $p = 0.1$ . While this should not be an issue, since when moral awareness is included in the model the effect becomes significant, and moral awareness is found to fully mediate the effect. In the interest of scientific rigour, and given that with respect to H3a, a lack of statistical power appears to have been a reoccurring issue across the reported CRM studies thus far, I decided to conduct a final, replication study with a view to obtaining irrefutable evidence in support of H3a. Ideally, I would have preferred to run a replication study with both advertisement conditions (Prostate Cancer UK and Susan G Komen UK) but this would have logically required a much larger sample size, which due to budget constraints was not feasible. An alternative option could have been to collect additional data for Study 6, however research shows that such an approach results in inflated type 1 error rates and is therefore not good scientific practice (Simmons, Nelson and Simonsohn, 2011). I therefore chose to re-run Study 6 using only one of the stimuli conditions but keeping the number of participants similar ( $n = 359$ ). This essentially had the effect of almost doubling the study’s sample size. Of the two advertisement conditions, the Susan G Komen (UK) stimulus was chosen at random to be used in the replication study, by means of a coin toss. The procedure was identical to that of Study 6, except moral awareness was not measured in this instance, to

keep the study as clean and short as possible. The basic demographics of the participants; mean age 39, SD 9, 59 % males, closely replicated those of Study 6. The results of the replication experiment firmly support H3a and H3b. A gender/charity matching x advance gratitude two-way ANOVA on purchase intention revealed the anticipated disordinal interaction  $F(1,355) = 8.6, p = 0.00$  (see figure 3.9). Most importantly, both contrasts of theoretical interest produced the hypothesised outcomes. Under conditions of gender/charity matching (i.e. when psychological connectedness to the cause is high; that is to say in the case of female participants) the advance gratitude expression resulted in increased purchase intentions for the Susan G Komen (UK) charity sponsored pen ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 5, SD = 2.48$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.8, SD = 2.36, F(1, 355) = 4.3, 95\% \text{ CI } (.42: 1.61), p = 0.039, d = .33$ ). Yet, when the charitable cause did not match the gender of the participants, in other words, in the case of male participants, exposure to the advance gratitude expression actually produced an aversive effect, reducing males' willingness to purchase the Susan G Komen breast cancer charity sponsored pen,  $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 5.0, SD = 2.19$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.3, SD = 2.56; 95\% \text{ CI } (-1.33: -.044), (F(1, 355) = 4.4, p = 0.036, d = -.29)$ . The replication study therefore provides definitive evidence in support of H3a.



**Figure 3.9: The effects of gender/charity matching and advance gratitude on the purchase intention of a breast cancer charity sponsored pen.**

### **3.9. Study 7- Guide dog for the blind charity**

Studies 1 and 3 produced promising evidence in support for the premise that moral awareness is the underlying mechanism behind the observed effects of advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour. By means of a measurement-of-mediation design the studies' findings revealed that moral awareness fully mediates the effect of advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour. By the same token, further mediational analysis from Study 1 and 3 helped cast notable doubt on the validity of demand effects/norms of reciprocity (Study 1) or the warm glow effect (Study 3), as potential alternative explanations to the proposed moral awareness account, since no significant indirect effects were found for these variables. Yet, as noted by Spencer et al (2005), the measurement of mediation design which tests for mediation



statistically, is not the only tool that experimentalists have at their disposal for demonstrating mediation. While valid, like all approaches, the measurement approach has its limitations, for instance, measured moral awareness may correlate with other unobserved variables that produce the observed effect (see Spencer et al., 2005) . Therefore, whenever possible one should strive to use multiple methods.

With this in mind, the goal of Study 7 was to provide additional evidence for the mechanism underlying the observed effects through a moderation of process design, in which the underlying process is manipulated rather than measured. I test for the mediating mechanism of increased moral awareness by manipulating a theoretically relevant moderator; the ethical<sup>5</sup> nature of the request. An additional aim of Study 7 was to exclude plausible competing explanations for the observed effects. As stated earlier, it is conceivable that an advance gratitude expression may work by tapping into implicit norms of reciprocity/demand effects (somehow one may simply feel more obliged or expected to help when thanked in advance) or by making one feel good about helping (inducing a “warm glow” effect). If such competing explanations are valid however, one would expect an advance gratitude expression to increase donor compliance (albeit perhaps to a lesser degree), even when the request for help comes from a charity that could be seen as adopting borderline morally dubious, or grey area practices. In contrast, an increased moral awareness account would predict the precise opposite; a backfiring effect of advance gratitude on prosocial compliance, when the request for help is made by a morally questionable source, because the individual’s heightened moral awareness, should result in him/her questioning the true moral value of complying with the request. I manipulate the ethical nature of the request through the ethical credibility of the charity making the request for the donation.

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<sup>5</sup> I use the terms ethical and moral interchangeably

### 3.9.1 Sample and Procedure

After removing twenty two (5.1%) participants from the dataset for failing the attention check, a total of  $N = 408$ , UK nationals were recruited to participate online in this 2 (advance gratitude: yes vs. no)  $\times$  2 (ethical credibility of the charity: high vs. low) between subjects randomised factorial design study. Mean age of participants 27, SD 9.9, 65% females.

Firstly, participants were exposed to one of two purposely designed advertisements of a fictitious charity called Sponsor a Puppy, which described the charity's mission (to train guide dogs for the visually impaired) and solicited donation support. The advance gratitude condition advert additionally included: *"Thank you in advance for supporting a puppy in training"*. Participants were subsequently exposed to what was allegedly an independent third party charity evaluator's assessment report of the charity's credentials. In the low ethical credibility condition, the charity's credentials were manipulated by assigning low scores on three ethically relevant criteria: accountability and transparency, fundraising practices and CEO compensation. The stimuli provided a brief explanation for each criterion and explained the grading scale. The efficiency and effectiveness with which the charity made use of donations was however controlled for and remained constant across conditions, by assigning a maximum score for financial health and performance (for the study stimuli, please refer to appendix 7).

*Dependent Measure: donation intention:* After having studied the stimuli participants were directed to answer 2 questions regarding their donation intention, on a 1 (not at all) to 9

(very much ) scale: “How likely are you to sponsor a pup through the charity?”, “How willing are you to sponsor a pup through the charity?”

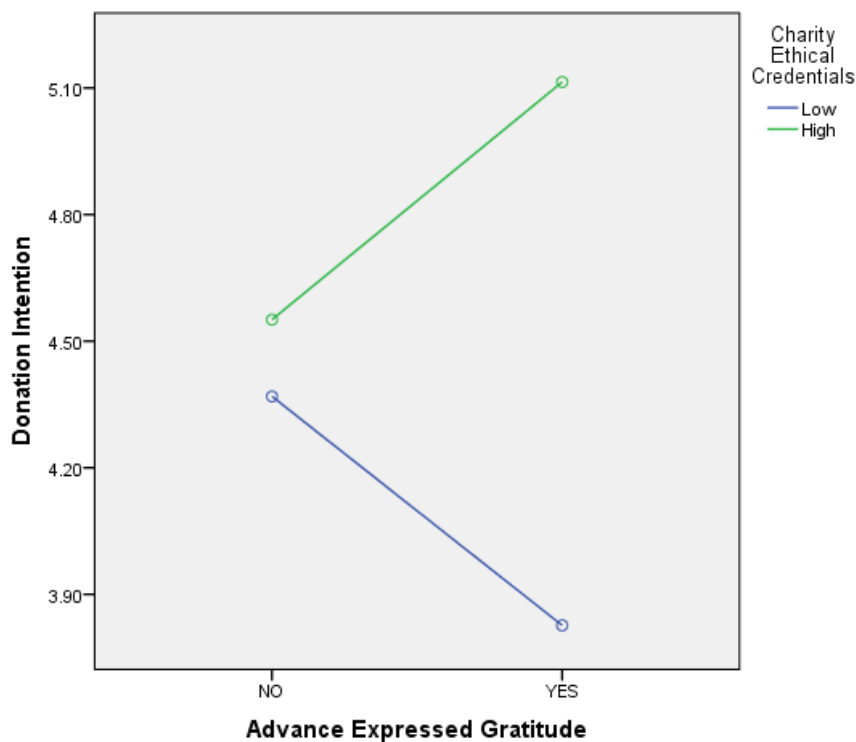
*Ethical Credibility of the Charity Manipulation Check:* To ensure that the manipulation of the charity’s ethical credibility had worked as intended, participants were asked to express their level of agreement/disagreement with the following statement on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 9 (very much): “Sponsor a puppy is an ethical charity”. Finally, participants completed the attention check and demographic measures and were debriefed to the purpose of the study.

### 3.9.2 Results

*Manipulation Check:* As anticipated, participants in the high ethical charity condition rated the charity to be significantly more ethical than did participants in the low ethical charity condition ( $M_{\text{lowethicalcredentials}} = 5.6$ ,  $SD = 1.96$  vs.  $M_{\text{highethicalcredentials}} = 7.1$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ;  $F(1,403) = 64.5$ ,  $p < .01$ )

*Dependent Measure:* The two donation intention items showed good reliability and were averaged to form a donation intention index ( $r = 0.83$ ). Results from a two-way ANOVA with donation intention as the dependent measure revealed a main effect for the ethical credibility of the charity, ( $M_{\text{lowethicalcredentials}} = 4.1$ ,  $SD = 2.05$  vs.  $M_{\text{highethicalcredentials}} = 4.8$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ,  $F(1,404) = 12.9$ ,  $p = .001$ , but no main effect for advance gratitude ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.5$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 4.5$ ;  $F(1,404) < 1$ ,  $p = 0.96$ . Crucial to my theorising, the predicted ethical credibility x advance gratitude interaction on donation intention was significant  $F(1,404) = 7.3$ ,  $p = 0.01$ . Furthermore, and most importantly, simple effects

analysis reveals that when the request for support comes from the charity with the somewhat dubious ethical credentials, expressing advance gratitude results in a fall in reported donation intentions ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 2.07$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 2$ ;  $F(1,404) = 3.5$ , 95% CI (0.02; -1.1)  $p = 0.06^6$ ,  $d = .29$ ), whereas when it is the charity with sound ethical credentials that is thanking donors in advance for their support, the effect is reversed, with advance gratitude resulting in an increase in prosocial intent ( $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 2.01$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 5.1$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ;  $F(1,404) = 3.7$ , 95% CI (0.00; 1.14),  $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = .24$ ).



**Figure 3.10: Pattern of donation intention according to the ethical credibility of the charity and advance expressed gratitude**

<sup>6</sup> While a  $p$  value of 0.06 is clearly only just beyond the cut-off point of 0.05, the contrast becomes significant when gender is introduced as a control variable,  $M_{\text{nogratitude}} = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 2.07$  vs.  $M_{\text{gratitude}} = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 2.0$ ; 95% CI (-1.12; -0.10),  $p = 0.02$ . Gender however does not moderate the effects.

### **3.9.3 Discussion**

Building directly on the findings from Study 1, and with the purpose of lending further credence to the premise that increased moral awareness is the underlying process behind the observed effect of advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour, Study 7 took a different and experimental design approach to testing for mediation. By means of a moderation of process design, the study finds that when advance gratitude expressions come from an ethically credible charity, the effects on donor motivations are positive, thus replicating the main effect results of Study 1. However and most pertinently, the study also finds that when it is a charity with questionable ethical credentials that is adopting advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal the effect backfires resulting in a fall of donor intentions.

Such a pattern of results is clearly consistent with an increased moral awareness account for the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour. This is because one would logically expect that higher levels of moral awareness would make individuals more likely to recognise the moral value of supporting virtuous charities while also making these more critical of charities that have ethical shortcomings. Furthermore, the exact nature of the observed effects more directly rules out the alternative explanations of norms of reciprocity/demand effects, as such accounts would not explain the backfiring effect observed in the low ethical credibility condition. In sum, Study 7 provides supplementary and robust evidence in support of H2.

### **3.10. Study 8- WWF -Moral identity**

Studies 1 through to 7 have provided a comprehensive test of my hypothesised framework. The goal of Study 8 was to explore one last boundary condition for the observed effects. More specifically, I explored the role of chronic moral identity as a moderator of the effect of advanced gratitude expressions on prosocial intentions. To reiterate, my central tenet has been that advance gratitude expressions act as a moral prime and thus increase moral awareness by awakening an individual's dormant moral self. Yet, one should not expect that an advance gratitude expression will be uniformly effective at increasing moral awareness for all individuals. In the case of some people, that is, of those with a relatively high moral identity centrality, the moral self will already be highly accessible. For such people an advance gratitude expression is essentially superfluous because the moral self is already active. By and large these will be individuals who are already aware of the moral value of the appeal and are a priori motivated and likely to act prosocially.

Such individuals would be expected to score highly on the moral identity internalisation subscale (Aquino, Freeman, Lin and Felps, 2009) as it the internalisation dimension of the moral identity scale that captures an individual's chronic, subjective experience of having a moral identity (Boegershausen, Aquino, Reed, 2015). Prior research has in fact shown that scores on the internalisation measure are revealing of the activation potential of one's moral self, that is; the likelihood that one's moral self-schema will become activated within the working self-concept and consequently shape moral behaviour (Aquino et al, 2009; Freeman and Aquino, 2008, Aquino and Reed, 2002).

Conversely, one would expect advance gratitude expressions to have relatively the greatest impact on individuals whose moral identity would not be normally accessible without priming, (i.e. in the case of people who score relatively low on the moral identity internalisation subscale) because the lower one's chronic level of moral identity the less likely one is to act prosocially in the first instance. Specifically, I hypothesise that for individuals who score comparatively high on the moral identity internalisation measure, advance gratitude expressions will have less of an effect on the moral self (if any) and will therefore result in a relatively weaker (or no) increase in prosocial behaviour. However, I anticipate that for individuals who score comparatively lower on the moral identity internalisation measure, advance gratitude expressions can provide the nudge (situational prime) that activates the moral self, resulting in increased prosocial behaviour. More formally put:

**H5a:** When moral identity centrality is relatively low, appeals that include an advance gratitude expression will result in a relatively stronger increase in prosocial behaviour.

**H5b:** When moral identity centrality is relatively high, appeals that include an advance gratitude expression will result in a relatively weaker increase in prosocial behaviour.

### ***3.10.1 Sample and Procedure***

An international sample of one hundred and fifty individuals was recruited to participate in an online study of “individual characteristics and decision making”. 13 (8.7%) participants were excluded from the dataset and from subsequent analysis for having failed

the attention check. This left me with a sample size of 137 participants; age range of participants, 18-69 years, mean age 26, SD 9.9, 61% female. The study was comprised of two parts: a survey which contained the moral identity internalisation measure and the advanced gratitude priming experiment. A two-group study design with a control condition and an advance gratitude condition was employed for the experiment. All participants completed the moral identity measures and were subsequently randomised to experimental conditions. Between completing the survey and commencing the experiment participants completed some unrelated filler tasks.

*Moral Identity Internalisation Measure:* in order to assess participants' moral identity centrality, all participants first completed the internalisation subscale of the Aquino and Reed (2002) moral identity measure. Participants were asked to read a list of nine characteristics that might describe a person (i.e., caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind) and then to visualise "*the kind of person who has these characteristics [and] imagine how that person would think, feel, and act.*" Per se, these characteristics do not comprise the moral identity scale however they capture lay construals of a moral prototype (a "moral person") and through spreading activation (Collins and Loftus, 1975) this methodology renders accessible other traits around which a person's moral identity is structured. Participants should then have accessible within their self-schema a series of traits that constitute their moral identity and which will be called upon when answering the items that comprise the internalisation sub scale (Aquino and Reed, 2002). As a result one can determine how chronically important (central) moral identity is to the self. Importantly the word moral is not used in the instrument. After being asked to reflect about someone who possesses the above listed traits, participants were presented with the following items: (a) "*It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics*", (b) "*Being someone*



*who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am*", (c) *"I would be ashamed to be a person who had these characteristics (R)"*, and (d) *"I strongly desire to have these characteristics."* For each item a 7 point Likert scale was employed, anchored ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Item 3 was reverse coded, so that higher values on the scale would equate to a higher centrality of moral identity.

*Advance Gratitude Manipulation:* participants were exposed to one of two versions of an edited WWF charity advertisement that showed the image of an elephant with the catch line *"I am not a trinket"*. The purpose of the advertisement was to garner support against wildlife crime. For the advance gratitude condition the original advertisement was edited to also include the following sentence: *"Endangered elephants need your support. Thank you in advance"* (see appendix 8). The control advertisement condition was also edited to serve as a more adequate control and it included the sentence *"Endangered elephants need your support"*. Therefore the only difference between the two conditions was the advance gratitude expression *"Thank you in advance"*.

*Dependent variable:* After reviewing the advertisement participants were asked to provide data regarding their intention to donate to the charity. Donation intention was measured by the following two items: *"How likely are you to make a financial donation to WWF?"*, *"How willing are you to make a financial donation to WWF?"* Items used a 9-point scale, anchored 1, (not at all) to 9, (very much). Finally, participants completed the attention check and demographic measures and were debriefed to the purpose of the study.

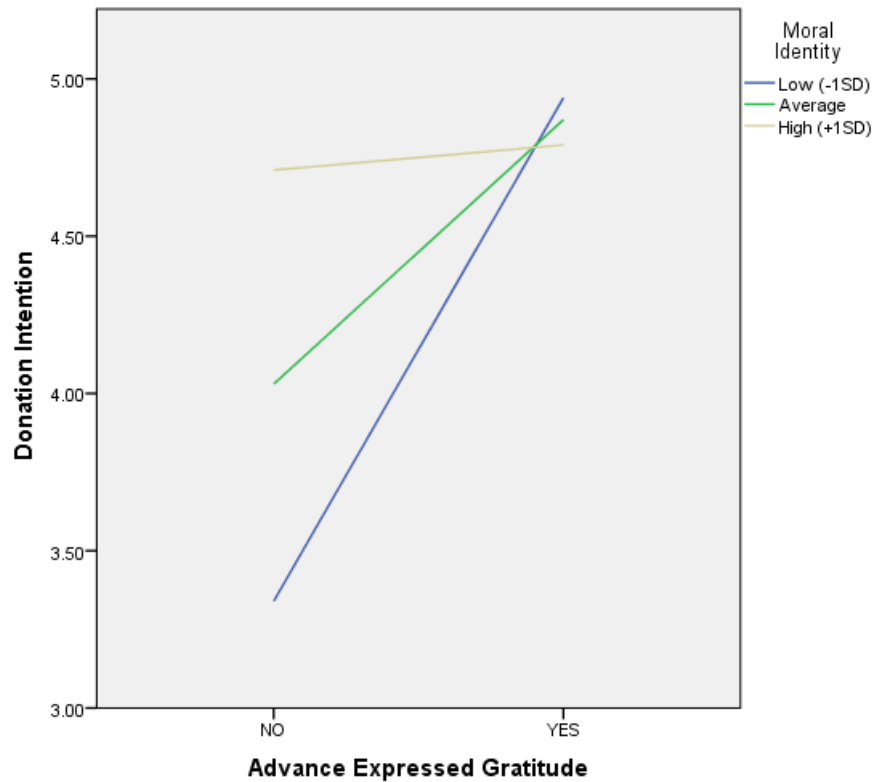
### 3.10.2 Results

*Moral Identity Internalisation Measure:* The items showed good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) and were averaged to determine the moral identity centrality score for each participant. To ensure the two study conditions did not differ in their chronic levels of moral identity I ran a one-way ANOVA with the moral identity internalisation score as the dependent variable. As expected this was not significant ( $F(1, 136) = 0.1, p = 0.73$ ). On average, participants in the advance gratitude condition ( $M = 6.09, SD = 0.79$ ) did not differ to those in the control condition ( $M = 6.04, SD = 0.98$ ) in terms of their baseline moral identity internalisation score.

*Dependent Variable:* The two donation intention items showed good reliability and were averaged to form a financial donation intention index ( $r = 0.72$ ). Results from an ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of advertisement type on financial donation intention ( $F(1, 136) = 6.11, p = 0.015$ ). Replicating studies 1 and 2, a contrast analysis revealed that on average participants in the advanced gratitude condition expressed a higher intention to donate ( $M = 4.9, SD = 2.0$ ) compared to those in the control condition ( $M = 4.0, SD = 2.0$ ), 95% CI (0.17; 1.55),  $p = .015$ . Effect size Cohen's  $d = 0.45$ , Partial Eta Squared = 0.043. To test for H5a and H5b, that is, for the moderation effect of moral identity on the relationship between advanced gratitude expressions and donation intention, I ran a regression analysis using PROCESS model 1 by Preacher and Hayes (2008). The overall model  $F(3,133) = 5.37, p = .00$  and most importantly the interaction moral identity\*advance gratitude  $b = 0.86, t(133) = 2.2, p = 0.03$  were significant. Simple slopes analysis further revealed the following coefficient effect sizes at respectively: low ( $-1SD$ ), moderate (mean) and high ( $+1SD$ ) levels of moral identity:  $b = 1.6, t(133) = 3.29, 95\% \text{ CI } (0.64; 2.56), p =$

.00, for 1 SD below the mean (equivalent to a moral identity value of 5.18),  $b = 0.84$   $t(133) = 2.48$ , 95% CI (0.17; 1.51),  $p = 0.01$  at the moral identity mean value of 6.06, and  $b = 0.08$   $t(133) = 0.16$ , 95% CI (-.88; 1.03),  $p = 0.87$ , for 1 SD above the mean ( a moral identity value of 6.94) (see figure 3.11).

Therefore it is clear from the analysis that when moral identity is high (+1 SD from the mean) advance gratitude expressions have no additional effect on prosocial behaviour; the effect size is negligible,  $b = 0.08$  and non-statistically significant. However, when moral identity centrality is “low” (i.e. - 1 SD from the mean) or at average (moderate) levels, advance gratitude expressions result in an increase in prosocial behaviour when compared to the control condition. Therefore, H5a and H5b are both supported. In addition, I employed the Johnson-Neyman (Hayes, 2013) technique to identify where along the continuum of moral identity values, levels of donation intention ceased to differ significantly between the advance gratitude and control condition. The results revealed that an advance gratitude expression has no additional effect on prosocial behaviour for individuals whose moral identity score is above 6.24 (above the 41st percentile).



***Figure 3.11: The moderating effect of moral identity centrality on the relationship effects of advance gratitude expressions on donation intentions***

### ***3.10.3 Discussion***

Using a real-world charity and advertisement, findings from Study 8 replicate those of Studies 1 and 2 in demonstrating that on average, participants who are exposed to advance gratitude expressions embedded in a charity’s appeal respond by expressing stronger prosocial tendencies towards the cause. However, most importantly, Study 8 further extends our understanding of the link between advanced gratitude expressions and prosocial behaviour by demonstrating a theoretically relevant boundary condition for the previously documented effects. In line with my theorising, the effects are not observed for individuals who score highly on the moral identity internalisation scale because their moral self is already

“wide awake”. Conversely, among individuals with a low or average chronic level of moral identity, I reproduce previous findings such that exposure to an advanced gratitude expression results in an increased willingness to positively respond to a request for help. The findings from Study 8 therefore also provide additional evidence in support of the premise that advance gratitude expressions work by activating a dormant moral self.

### ***3.11 General Discussion***

By using a multitude of field and experimental settings and by employing a variety of a) research designs b) operationalisations and manipulations of the theoretical constructs c) populations (in age and nationality), as well as d) various measures of prosocial behaviour, I provide a comprehensive empirical investigation of the effect of advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal. I propose a conceptual framework which elucidates on when and why advance gratitude expressions may or may not result in increased prosocial tendencies.

The introductory pilot field study provides an initial demonstration of the effect of an advance gratitude expression on prosocial behaviour. Study 1 replicates this main effect with a different but also consequential behavioural outcome. It additionally demonstrates how the increased desire to act prosocially stems from an individual’s increased moral awareness; that is the enhanced ability to recognise the moral significance of the appeal. Mirroring the results from the pilot study and those of Study1, Study 2 further adds to the generalisability of the findings while also shedding further light into the process by showing that psychological

connectedness moderates the relationship between advance gratitude expressions and prosocial intent.

Study 3, replicates the moderation effect observed in Study 2, while using the more rigorous experimental route which directly manipulates the construct of psychological connectedness to others. Also, by testing a different operationalisation of psychological connectedness and by showing that under conditions of low psychological connectedness advance gratitude expressions can backfire, Study 3 presents further and more conclusive evidence in support of the hypothesised role of psychological connectedness as a moderator of the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour. Looking to go beyond prosocial behaviour in the form of charitable donations of time or money, Study 4 demonstrates that the effectiveness of advance gratitude expressions can extend to the more commercial marketing setting of cause-related marketing purchases.

While Study 4 employed a controlled environment and laboratory style word exercises to manipulate psychological connectedness (self-construal), Study 5 demonstrates that similar effects can be obtained through simple in-text manipulations of marketing stimuli. The semantic techniques employed in Study 5 are therefore of potential value to marketing practitioners. Study 6 provides a complete examination of the proposed theoretical framework by testing for the conditional indirect effect of moral awareness on prosocial intent at different levels (high vs. low) of psychological connectedness to the cause. When psychological connectedness is high, as expected, Study 6 replicates the mediational findings from Study 1. Crucially however, Study 6 additionally demonstrates that when psychological connectedness to the cause is low (i.e. when one does not feel close and engaged with the

cause) advance gratitude expressions result in a decrease in prosocial intent via a reduced moral awareness.

Through a moderation of process design, Study 7 offers further evidence for the notion that moral awareness is the underlining mechanism behind the observed effects by demonstrating that advance gratitude expressions backfire in the case of charities that are not ethically credible. Finally, in Study 8 I identify a theoretically important boundary condition for the previously documented main effect; advance gratitude expressions fail to increase prosocial behaviour in the case of individuals whose moral identity centrality is already chronically high. The findings from Study 8 therefore further support my proposed mechanism of moral awareness, and the premise that advance gratitude expressions work by activating a dormant moral self.

In sum, across a total of 8 main studies (field, online, laboratory) 1 pilot and 2 follow-up studies, I provide converging evidence that advance expressions of gratitude can shape one's pro-social tendencies by making the perceived morality of the appeal appear more or less salient, and that indeed, the direction and strength of the effect, is subject to how psychologically connected one feels to the cause.

## ***Chapter 4: Theoretical Contributions of the Research***

This research makes several noteworthy theoretical contributions to the literature on emotions (in particular gratitude), moral identity, prosocial appeals and behaviour more generally. It also offers important insights regarding the interaction of advance gratitude expressions and donor psychological connectedness to the cause on prosocial behaviour.

First, at a broader level, by introducing the novel concept of an advance gratitude expression as a prosocial appeal, I contribute to the existing body of work examining the efficacy of persuasive strategies and message framing in charitable appeals (Chang and Lee 2009; Fennis, Janssens and Vohs 2009; Kristofferson, White and Peloza 2014; Kronrod, Grinstein and Wathieu 2011; Liu and Aaker, 2008; White and Simpson 2013; White and Peloza 2009; Ye, Teng, Yu and Wang 2015). I show that simple expressions of advance gratitude can increase prosocial intent and actual behaviour by awakening the donor's "sleepy moral self" and thereby enhancing their moral awareness (the capacity to judge the moral worth of the decision at hand). I find the effect to be robust across different (a) dependent measures: financial donations (Studies 1, 7 and 8), volunteering (Studies 2 and 3) and cause related marketing purchases (Studies 4-6), (b) wordings for the manipulation of advance gratitude (c) types of charities and beneficiaries including: wildlife and animal charities (Studies 1, 2, 7 and 8), adult and children charities (Studies 4 and 5), national (Studies 1, 3, 6, 7) and international causes (Studies 2,4,5,8) and when the recipients are individuals (Studies 4-6) or groups of people (Study 3). Furthermore, although outside the scope of this thesis' research focus, findings from follow-up study 1 additionally seemed to suggest that advance gratitude expressions can be more effective at inducing prosocial conduct than other comparable types of appeals.



Second, by demonstrating that the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviours stems from an underlying process of moral awareness, I add to the existing body of knowledge concerning the mechanisms through which moral identity impacts charitable giving, such as the state of moral elevation (Aquino, McFerran and Laven, 2011) and the expanding of in-group boundaries and the circle of moral regard (Finnel, Reed, Aquino, 2011; Reed and Aquino, 2003; Winterich et al. 2009). More specifically, although there is ample research testifying that moral identity is a powerful predictor of charitable behaviour (Aquino, McFerran, and Laven 2011; Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim and Felps 2009; Aquino and Reed, 2002; Reed, Aquino, Levy, 2007; Reed and Aquino 2003; Winterich, Mittal, Aquino; 2013; Winterich, Zhang, Mittal, 2012; Winterich, et al., 2009) surprisingly little attention has been given to studying the kind of factors which may situationally and integrally activate one's moral identity thereby influencing a potential donor's assessment of the morality of the charitable appeal. By demonstrating that advance gratitude expressions embedded in marketing communications can awaken one's dormant moral self and increase moral awareness, I am contributing to the literature on moral identity priming, which to date has employed more incidental and less practical forms of primes of lower ecological validity (see for instance, Aquino et al., 2009, Study 2, the listing of the ten commandments or Leavitt et., 2015, Study 1, word completion task).

Furthermore and most pertinently, my conceptual model also proposes that if one is to fully understand the effects of expressing advance gratitude on prosocial behaviour of particular interest is the interaction advance gratitude expression\*psychological connectedness. Because gratitude is an other-focused, communal and interpersonally oriented emotion (Tangney et al., 2007 ) the degree to which an individual feels psychologically

connected and engaged with the cause shapes how that individual perceives and responds to advance gratitude expressions. As alluded to previously, when there is engagement and connectedness with the cause, one is receptive to advance gratitude expressions and these will activate one's moral identity, increase one's moral awareness and accordingly, make it more likely that the virtuous moral nature of the appeal is recognised, resulting in higher levels of prosocial behaviour. On the other hand, when one feels psychologically detached from a cause and has no desire to engage with it, advance gratitude expressions could fall on deaf ears or even backfire because one is less amenable to being approached and solicited in the first instance. Indeed, under such conditions, and in line with psychological reactance theory, one is more likely to develop an aversive reaction (Brehm, 1966; Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974; Dowd, Wallbrown, Sanders, and Yesenosky, 1994) and perceive an advance gratitude expression as an intrusive and manipulative marketing ploy. A corollary of this is that the actual moral significance of supporting the cause is not recognised, and this reduced moral awareness translates into lower levels of prosocial conduct.

Thus, an important point to observe is that unlike other forms of moral identity priming used in studies to date, because of the social, interactive nature of advance gratitude expressions, these will only succeed in activating an individual's moral identity when there is psychological connectedness to the cause. That is, increased moral awareness may not automatically result from exposure to advance gratitude expressions, and in fact, under conditions of low psychological connectedness, the opposite may well occur. This is a significant finding because if it were the case that advance gratitude expressions acted as an unconditional prime of moral identity and enhanced moral awareness, one would not observe the boomerang effects seen in Studies 2 and 6 because, as previous research has shown, the expansive boundaries that characterise an activated moral identity would be expected to

minimise the effect of low psychological connectedness (Choi and Winterich, 2013, Reed and Aquino, 2003, Winterich et al, 2013). For example, work by Reed and Aquino (2003), shows that higher levels of moral identity result in more favourable attitudes even towards out-groups, towards whom one would normally feel lower levels of psychologically connectedness.

Thirdly, and following on from the previously outlined contribution, given the rising competition among charities and the limited financial resources consumers have to allocate to charitable giving it is becoming increasingly important for consumers to be able to recognise the moral worthiness of a cause. By specifically demonstrating that advance gratitude expressions of gratitude can effect moral awareness (Studies 1, 6 and 7) and so an individual's capacity to evaluate the moral worth of the appeal, I also further extend the broad marketing literature on charitable giving/ prosocial behaviour. To date, such literature has dedicated surprisingly little attention to studying the kind of factors (situational or other) which may influence a potential donor's assessment of the moral value of the charitable act (see Lee et al, 2004 for an exception).

A fourth contribution of my research relates to the general role that emotions play in shaping prosocial behaviour. Extant work has provided strong evidence in support of the important role that donor experienced emotions such as empathy and sympathy play in motivating prosocial actions (Basil, Ridgway, Basil 2008; Batson et al. 1991; Batson, Early, Salvarini 1997; Ford and Merchant, 2010; Small and Simonsohn, 2009; Small and Verocchi, 2009; Liu and Aaker 2008; Lowenstein and Small 2007). Yet, there has been much less focus on investigating the influence that beneficiary expressed emotions can have on donors' perceptions of charitable appeals and charitable giving (for an exception, see Small and

Verocchi, 2009). Thus, the results of the present research make an important addition to the limited literature on emotions as signals in prosocial behaviour, by demonstrating that by simply making potential donors cognizant of recipients' emotional state of gratitude (through advance gratitude expressions), donor perceptions and prosocial behaviour can be shaped in consequential ways.

Finally, my work also adds to the current understanding of the construct of gratitude by providing empirical evidence in support of its unique moral disposition. Across the ages, both psychologists and moral philosophers (Cicero, 1851; Hardy, Walker, Olsen, Skalski, & Basinger, 2011; Hurst-house, 1999; McCullough and Tsang, 2004; Taylor, 2002; Watkins, 2013) have presented persuasive theoretical arguments in favour of the notion that gratitude is the quintessential moral emotion and a key component to a moral personality. Arguably however, empirical findings so far have fallen somewhat short in terms of providing equally compelling empirical evidence. To the best of my knowledge, existing studies have merely demonstrated the link between gratitude and prosocial behaviour, thus only indirectly attesting to the moral virtue of gratitude (Bartlett and DeSteno, 2006; Algoe, Haidt and Gable, 2008). Such studies have rested on the assumption that prosocial behaviour is moral behaviour because as postulated by numerous ethicists (Kant 1951; Singer, 1981) and psychologists (Eisenberg, 2000; Gilligan, 1982) demonstrating social responsiveness to the needs and interests of others, is a defining feature of morality. In this thesis, by experimentally showing that advance gratitude expressions can increase prosocial intent by priming one's moral identity and thus increasing moral awareness, I offer more conclusive evidence in support of the theoretical claim that gratitude is a moral construct.

## ***Chapter 5: Practical Implications***

From a managerial and societal perspective, the current work is timely and should appeal to managers of non-profit organisations, as well as managers of private enterprises engaging in charitable work through cause related marketing practices. Since the financial crisis of 2008, the slowdown of the world economy has meant that governments world-wide have experienced severe budget constraints. This has unfortunately forced many of them to cut their funding for important welfare programs. Non-profit organisations in particular have been left to pick-up the slack while being additionally confronted with the difficulty of having to raise funds during more challenging times (Consultancy UK, 2017; Third Sector, 2016b). In response to such pressing needs and challenges, this thesis offers charities with actionable insights into the psychology of donors, to help with the design of more effective appeals.

The potential to do good at a societal level that stems from this research is substantial. Findings from the exploratory study conducted into the current adoption of advance gratitude expressions as a prosocial appeal practice suggest that these are far from being ubiquitously employed by charities. There is certainly further scope for non-profit organisations to benefit from their value added. Outcomes from the field study (Study 1) provide some indication of the potential of this research's real world impact. The data proposes that embedding an advance gratitude expression in marketing stimuli can help charities gain important scarce resources, without incurring additional costs, as evidenced by the 36% increase in donation revenue experienced relative to the control condition. In fact, on average, as the main effect results from across this dissertation visibly demonstrate (i.e. see pilot study, Study 1, Study 2, Study

8) advance gratitude expressions “nudge” people into providing more support to morally worthy causes and others in need.

Clearly, because of the enhanced moral awareness that typically results from being primed with an advance gratitude expression, expressions of advance gratitude could also be of value to public policy makers, to be used in contexts which require compliance in the form of soliciting socially responsible behaviour. For instance, if road slow down signage also included a “thank you” this may result in fewer cases of speeding and accidents. Or perhaps, by having voter notification cards that thanked citizens in advance for voting, voter turnout rates could be increased. Results from my real world field study, which looked at the effect of advance gratitude expressions on survey completion rates (9% increase in absolute terms and 28% relative increase in compliance compared to the control condition), would suggest that advance gratitude interventions, may well be effective at eliciting similar forms of social accountability and socially responsible behaviour, that benefit others and the collective.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that advance gratitude expressions should be employed carefully. The moderating effect of psychological connectedness to the cause means that care must be paid in ensuring the target audience perceives a connection with the cause, or the effect can be counterproductive. To ensure success, marketers and public officials alike may try to prime connectedness by, for instance, playing up the notions of interdependence or of belonging to a community (White and Peloza; 2009 and White and Simpson; 2013), by highlighting similarities or common attributes between the donor and beneficiary (Cialdini & DeNicholas, 1989; Gino and Galinsky, 2012) which could take the form of demographic, psychographic, geographic or even behavioural variables. Or by

specifically targeting donors whose social identity is likely to be already congruent with the cause, such as might be the case with gender specific causes (see Study 6 for example).

## ***Chapter 6: Limitations and Directions for Future Research***

As is the case with any piece of research, the current research has some caveats, which by the same token represent potential avenues for future investigation. One limitation relates to the hypothesis concerning the backfiring effect of advance gratitude expressions on people who are psychologically disconnected from the cause and who are thus assumed to want to avoid engaging with it and being solicited to support it. The hypothesis is based on the premise that under such conditions, advance gratitude expressions would elicit a state of psychological reactance. This would manifest itself in the form of a decreased moral awareness for the cause and a resulting fall in prosocial behaviour. I have previously argued there is a strong theoretical basis and ample evidence to support the proposed rationale. The literature on psychological reactance indeed ascertains that people can develop aversive reactions to obvious persuasion attempts (Brehm, 1966; Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Wicklund, 1974; Dowd, Wallbrown, Sanders, and Yesenosky, 1994). Psychological reactance theory would therefore predict that when psychological connectedness is low, advance gratitude expressions could be perceived as intrusive and manipulative. Indeed, other gratitude research has found that gratitude expressions can be interpreted as devious ( Carey, Clique, Leighton, Lambert, 1976), reducing the value placed on the act of supporting the cause.

Although, in study 6 I find evidence that advance gratitude expressions can reduce moral awareness and subsequent prosocial behaviour, a more complete assessment of the hypothesised backfiring mechanism would include some assessment of psychological reactance. For example, the Hong psychological reactance scale (Hong and Faedda, 1996), which measures an individual's predisposition to reactance, could have been administered to



participants some time prior to commencing the study to see if this variable would interact with the advance gratitude expression manipulation. One would expect the backfiring effect to apply only for those participants chronically high on reactance.

On a related note, it would also be interesting to test whether under conditions of low psychological connectedness to the cause, advance gratitude expressions deactivate one's moral identity and result in a general disposition to act less morally and prosocially or whether the reduced moral awareness is indeed cause and context specific. If the proposed explanation of psychological reactance put forward holds, the observed backfiring effect should only be cause specific. Future research could further test this claim.

Another point worth considering is that although the current research suggests that the real world effect can be substantial, none of the studies addressed the relative permanence of the advance gratitude expression effect on prosocial behaviour and attitudes. We do not know if the effect is lasting, how it may evolve over time and what other spill over effects there may be. It is a possibility that the effects may wane over time, as fundraisers repeatedly apply the concept. On the other hand, as has largely been shown to be the case so far with priming effects and psychological research more generally (i.e. loss aversion, framing effects, endowment effects etc.) it is also possible that the effect will not fade substantially because of repeated use. On the contrary, there is in fact evidence, albeit in the particular context of interpersonal relationships, to suggest that over time expressing gratitude can help build trust and strengthen relationships (Algoe et al 2008; Bartlett et al 2011). One may therefore wonder if, analogously, expressions of advance gratitude could even provide the initial impetus that helps to initiate and foster stronger long term donor/charity relationships, along with more meaningful and impactful support. Such questions are worthy of future testing and clarification.

Additionally, while I have shown that the effect of advance gratitude expressions is robust and holds across a variety of conditions (populations, charities, types of prosocial behaviours etc.) future research could specifically examine the role of potential moderators. For instance, appeals for charitable support can often also include some mention of self or other benefits (White and Peloza, 2009) as a means of providing a stronger justification for support<sup>7</sup>. It could be fruitful to explore how the moderator of self vs other benefits interacts with the increased moral awareness generally brought about by being exposed to an advance gratitude expression. One would intuitively expect other focused benefits to positively moderate the effect of advance gratitude expressions on prosocial behaviour. A more morally aware individual should be more likely to care about how her support will benefit others and should become more motivated to help once she learns of these. By contrast, in the case of self-benefits it is not immediately apparent what the effect of highlighting such benefits will be. It may depend on the nature of the benefit. Based on the premise that social relationships take the form of either economic or social exchanges (Fiske, 1992; Heyman and Ariely, 2004), one could draw a tentative distinction between self-benefits that are transactional or economic in nature such as a tax deduction or a gift, versus self-benefits which are more social in nature, such as highlighting how one may feel good about yourself for donating (White and Peloza, 2009). Prior research has found that highlighting transactional or economic benefits to the self can backfire because intrinsic motivation is crowded out (Heyman and Ariely, 2004). One might expect this negative effect to be even stronger when advance gratitude is expressed. The heightened moral awareness could dampen one's intrinsic motivation further, as the moral inappropriateness of deriving a very personal benefit from what is supposedly intended to be an altruistic, social act becomes more salient.

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<sup>7</sup> Self-benefit appeals highlight benefits experienced by the donor, whereas other benefit appeals will focus attention on the benefits experienced by the recipient of the support.

In contrast, it is conceivable that other types of self-benefits, such as stating how good one will feel for helping others, might actually have the effect of enhancing one's intrinsic altruistic motivation by highlighting a benefit that is congruent with the donor's moral identity and prosocial motivations. It should then follow that when advance gratitude is expressed and the donor's moral identity is activated, the self-benefit effect should be even more pronounced, as the benefit should appear more relevant to the moral self.

Finally, in the current research, advance gratitude was expressed primarily in private settings, where the public self-image concerns of the donor were likely to have been minimal. It could thus be interesting to test the moderating effect of factors that can heighten public self-image concerns such as expressing advance gratitude in more public settings, or priming public self-awareness (White and Peloza, 2009). Prior research in the field of charitable giving has found that amplifying public self-image concerns can increase donor support (Glazer and Konrad 1996) because of impression management concerns; people want to be seen to be doing the socially acceptable thing (White and Peloza, 2009). Given that advance gratitude expressions prime moral identity and as such they already strengthen the donor's motivation to do the "right thing" it is possible that one may see a ceiling effect or at best an additive effect, with the priming of public self-image concerns but arguably no interaction effect.

That said it could perhaps be of greater interest to investigate the specific case of how those with a low psychological connectedness to the cause would respond to receiving a public (vs private) expression of advance gratitude. Would this result in even higher levels of psychological reactance? Or would the social pressures of conforming mitigate the backfiring effect? If the latter is the case, then there may be some real generalizable benefit to expressing advance gratitude in more public ways/settings that enhance public self-image concerns.

Finally, on a more theoretical level, one may query whether the underlying mechanism of moral identity priming is the same for private versus public contexts (or when public image concerns are salient). I have argued that advance gratitude expressions activate one's moral identity and to demonstrate this I measured the internal moral identity dimension of the moral identity scale (see study 8). Prior research has shown that it is this sub dimension of the moral identity scale that captures the activation of the internal moral self (Reed et al. 2007) and is most strongly predictive of prosocial behaviour (Boergershausen, Aquino, Reed 2015). However, in contrast to the internal dimension of moral identity there is also the symbolic dimension which reflects the importance placed on exhibiting a public moral self. It thus represents one's sensitivity to the moral self as a social object and is therefore susceptible to impression management concerns, which make it more likely to be activated in public contexts. A corollary of this is that it may be relatively more influential on behaviours that are more public in nature and subject to public scrutiny. (Winterich, Mittal and Aquino, 2013; Winterich, Aquino, Mittal and Swartz, 2013). I would thus speculate that when very public expressions of advance gratitude are made or when public self- image concerns are high, it is the activation of the symbolic dimension of the moral self that is more likely to influence behaviour. Subsequent work could test this proposition and additionally investigate other possible ramifications of activating an aspect of one's moral identity that is more concerned with "impression management". For example, prior work has found that moral identity symbolisation can have negative consequences; it magnifies retaliatory and punitive reactions to mistreatment by others (Barclay et al. 2014), and makes people more inclined to practice moral licensing (Sachdeva et al. 2009).

All in all, the aforementioned opportunities for future research clearly demonstrate that research in the novel domain of advance gratitude expressions is rich with the potential to make further contributions to the fields of gratitude, morality and prosocial behaviour.

## ***Chapter 7: Concluding remarks***

While philosophers and psychologists alike would agree that morality is the most important part of the self (Stronhminger, Nichols, 2014), explaining moral behaviour and self-sacrifice purely in terms of the belief that some people are highly moral, while others are not, would fail to capture the contingent and complex nature of human morality (Aquino et al., 2009). Human beings are inconsistent; we often seemingly inexplicably vacillate from abandoning moral values in certain circumstances to enacting them scrupulously in others. Even “good” people may do bad things or fail to do what is “right”. This is because situational factors can also play a significant role in shaping one’s moral conduct by interacting with trait characteristics such as an individual’s moral self (Aquino et al. 2009; Leavitt, Zhu and Aquino; 2015).

Since the global economic crisis, more and more people have fallen into hardship and have found themselves in need of help from others. Thus charitable giving has become an increasingly relevant domain in which people can exercise morality and prosocial behaviour, so much so that the debate within the charity sector revolves around how best to appeal for support from potential donors (YouGov, 2012).

In line with the premises of the social-cognitive model of moral behaviour in this dissertation I introduce the concept of an advance gratitude expression as a situational, contextual cue that can act as an effective prosocial appeal by awakening the donor’s latent moral self. I put forward a conceptual framework which explains when and why an advance gratitude expression may or may not result in increased prosocial tendencies. Through 8

empirical studies, I provide robust converging evidence that advance gratitude expressions can shape one's prosocial tendencies and behaviour by impacting the perceived morality of the appeal and that indeed, the direction and strength of the effect is subject to the degree of psychological connectedness one feels to the cause. The present work makes significant theoretical contributions to three important streams of literature: emotions, moral identity, prosocial appeals and behaviour. It offers important and timely guidance to assist non-profit organizations, policy makers, in the designing of more effective appeals.

In closing, I hope this thesis will spur further research and interest in the domain of advance gratitude expressions and prosocial appeals more generally, so that academia may continue offering effective insights to consumers, non-profit organisations and policy makers regarding the best ways to encourage socially responsible behaviour and the soliciting of adequate support for those most in need.

## *Appendices: Experimental Materials*

### Appendix 1

#### Study 1: BCSPCA advance gratitude condition stimulus



**DONATE TO FIGHT ANIMAL CRUELTY IN BC**



Gandalf's "super sweet disposition" won the hearts of rescuers

Gandalf is now getting a second chance to a happy life with a new adoptive family.

Gandalf was found on a doorstep starving, blind in one eye, and desperately weak. Unfortunately, he is only one of many dogs in the Vancouver area that are being abused and abandoned. Last year the BC SPCA conducted 8,849 new cruelty investigations. This is a staggering number, and one that continues to rise.

We can't save more lives without your help. Abused and neglected animals rely on the generous donations from **people like you**. By supporting the BC Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, you can help rescue more animals like Gandalf from neglect and find them new, safe, and loving homes. Please give what you can today. Your gift makes a difference!

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**



© 2013 BC SPCA / BC SPCA Charitable Tax # BN 11881 9036 RR0001

## Appendix 2

### Study 2: WWF charity description stimulus

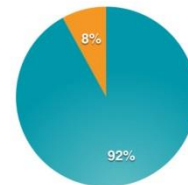


The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961, working on the conservation and restoration of the environment.

**WWF is leading a global campaign to stop wildlife crime. In recent years illegal wildlife trade has exploded to meet increasing demand for elephant ivory, rhino horns, and tiger products. Wildlife crime is now the most urgent threat to these endangered species.**

WWF is pushing Governments to protect threatened animal populations, by working to increase law enforcement, imposing strict deterrents. Support is also given to those on the frontlines being threatened by armed poachers to ensure they are properly equipped, trained and compensated.

92% of all money given to WWF goes directly to delivering conservation results.



© 2015 World Wildlife Fund 1250 24th Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20037

### Study 2: WWF advance gratitude condition advertisement

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT**





## Appendix 3

### Study 3: Qualtrics Screen shot extracts of self-construal manipulations

#### Interdependent manipulation

##### Verbal Processing Style Task

As one of our measures of your verbal processing style, we are going to have you read the following story. You will be asked to answer questions regarding this story later in the session. In order to determine whether people can still comprehend the story when they are somewhat distracted, we are asking people to click certain words. **Please click on all the pronouns "I", "my", "me" in the story on the next page.**

>>

**Please click on all the pronouns "I," "my", "me," you read in the story.**

##### My Trip to Victoria

My Victoria trip started out with a flight from the Edmonton International Airport that left at 6:00am. Why did I book such an early flight? After getting my boarding pass and making my way through security I grabbed a drink and waited at my gate for the call to board. Fortunately I didn't have to wait long and when my row number was called I boarded the plane and promptly fell asleep. I woke up when the plane started its decent into the Vancouver area. Feeling refreshed I watched as the plane passed over the University of British Columbia out on the peninsula and then landed safely at the Airport. I had decided in advance that I would rent a car and drive it over to Victoria so I had to make my way to the car rental area. After paying for the car and getting the keys I found my rental out in the parking lot. I then left the airport to head to the Tsawassen Ferry Terminal. Wow was it ever crazy on the roads. Clearly I had hit Vancouver and the surrounding areas' rush hour! Finally, I made it to the terminal where I almost missed the boat! The ferry was scheduled to depart at 9:00am sharp, I bought my ticket at 8:55 and was the LAST CAR on the ferry! The ferry sailing runs across the Strait of Georgia, and then through a narrow waterway called "Active Pass," which separates Mayne and Galiano islands. I enjoyed the ferry ride, which took me to Schwartz Bay.

It's about a half-hour drive from Swartz Bay to downtown Victoria, along the Pat Bay highway (Highway #17). Along the way I stopped off at a Geological Museum where there were displays of all the different ocean and coastlines around the area. I was going to enter the Aviation Museum but they were charging too much admission. So I ventured downtown and into the new Victoria Square Mall. I stopped for lunch at a fast-food chain in the food court. After that I stopped for a look at the historic Parliament Buildings, where the B.C. Government conducts its affairs. I got some wonderful photographs in front of the fountain, using the buildings as a backdrop. I spent the night in a hotel close to the water's edge.

## Independent manipulation

### Verbal Processing Style Task

As one of our measures of your verbal processing style, we are going to have you read the following story. You will be asked to answer questions regarding this story later in the session. In order to determine whether people can still comprehend the story when they are somewhat distracted, we are asking people to click certain words. **Please click on all the pronouns "we", "us", "our" in the story on the next page.**

>>

started its decent into the Vancouver area. Feeling refreshed we watched as the plane passed over the University of British Columbia out on the peninsula and then landed safely at the Airport. We had decided in advance that we would rent a car and drive it over to Victoria so we had to make our way to the car rental area. After paying for the car and getting the keys we found our rental out in the parking lot. We then left the airport to head to the Tsawassen Ferry Terminal. Wow was it ever crazy on the roads. Clearly we had hit Vancouver and the surrounding areas' rush hour! Finally, we made it to the terminal where we almost missed the boat! The ferry was scheduled to depart at 9:00am sharp, we bought our ticket at 8:55 and were the LAST CAR on the ferry! The ferry sailing runs across the Strait of Georgia, and then through a narrow waterway called "Active Pass," which separates Mayne and Galiano islands. We enjoyed the ferry ride, which took us to Swartz Bay.

It's about a half-hour drive from Swartz Bay to downtown Victoria, along the Pat Bay highway (Highway #17). Along the way we stopped off at a Geological Museum where there were displays of all the different ocean and coastlines around the area. We were going to enter the Aviation Museum but they were charging too much admission. So we ventured downtown and into the new Victoria Square Mall. We stopped for lunch at a fast-food chain in the food court. After that we stopped for a look at the historic Parliament Buildings, where the B.C. Government conducts its affairs. We got some wonderful photographs in front of the fountain, using the buildings as a backdrop. We spent the night in a hotel close to the water's edge.

### *Study 3: FamilyWorks charity description stimulus*



Not since the great depression has wealth inequality and poverty been so high in the US. The recession has forced millions of Americans into a hunger crisis<sup>1</sup>. The **FamilyWorks Food Bank** is a registered US charity that is dedicated to fighting the hunger crisis, providing fresh, healthy food to families across the country that are struggling to feed themselves.

In addition to fresh produce, the charity also strives to have specialty items, such as baby and infant foods. **FamilyWorks** is run by a small number of highly dedicated professional staff and relies on the help of volunteers and donors to make a difference.

<sup>1</sup> US Institute for Research on Poverty (2014)

### *Study 3: FamilyWorks advance gratitude expression stimulus condition*

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT FROM THE ROBERTS FAMILY**



Since losing their jobs and home because of the recession, the Roberts family has been living in hardship and insecurity, struggling to provide two healthy meals a day for their children Alison, Michael and baby Joshua.

5 year-old Alison suffers from epilepsy and needs medication. Because of reductions in Government Programs and rising food prices the Roberts are at times forced to skip meals so that Alison can receive her medication.

With your donation you can help the Roberts family live a more secure and healthy life.



## Appendix 4

### Study 4: Aquavita advertisement stimulus with advance gratitude manipulation



**aqua**  
VITA

**\$ 2.50 (500ML) NATURAL SPRING WATER**

COMPOSITION	mg / litre
Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)	130
Calcium (Ca ++)	31.3
Magnesium (Mg ++)	5.2
Sodium (Na +)	3.5
Potassium (K +)	0.5
Chloride (Cl -)	5.1
Sulphate (SO <sub>4</sub> -)	10.8
Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> -)	1.8
Iron (Fe ++)	< 0.01
Acidity (PH)	7.2

Licensed in 2 / 7 / 1969  
From the ministry of general health  
Bottled for National Green Water s.a.s



Since 2003 Aquavita has been in partnership with The End of Polio Charity, to raise funds for the worldwide eradication of Polio. Polio is a terrible disease that each year paralyses thousands of children across Africa and South Asia. Every child deserves the right to a healthy life. Polio is preventable with a simple vaccination. With every purchase of bottled of water you make, Aquavita contributes towards the cost of vaccinating a child in parts of the World still at risk from the virus.

**ON BEHALF OF ALL CHILDREN AT RISK, THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR CHOOSING TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST POLIO. WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL.**

THE GLOBAL POVERTY PROJECT

THE END OF POLIO

## Appendix 5

### Study 5: Aquavita advertisement stimulus with independent self-construal prime and advance gratitude expression



The advertisement features three bottles of Aquavita Natural Spring Water at the top left. The background is a light blue gradient with a mountain range silhouette. The brand name 'aqua' is in large blue lowercase letters, with 'VITA' in smaller uppercase letters below it. To the right of the brand name is a table of mineral composition. Below the brand name, the text 'NATURAL SPRING WATER' is written in blue. At the bottom left, there is a photograph of a child's face being vaccinated. To the right of the photograph, there is a paragraph of text about polio and a quote. At the bottom, there are two logos: 'THE GLOBAL POVERTY PROJECT' on the left and 'THE END OF POLIO' on the right.

**COMPOSITION** mg / litre

COMPOSITION	mg / litre
Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)	130
Calcium (Ca++)	38.3
Magnesium (Mg++)	9.2
Sodium (Na+)	3.5
Potassium (K+)	0.5
Chloride (Cl-)	5.1
Sulphate (SO4-)	10.8
Nitrate (NO3-)	1.8
Iron (Fe++)	< 0.01
Acidity (pH)	7.2

Licensed on 2 / 7 / 1988  
From the ministry of general health  
(Bottled for Sale and Transported in a 1)

**\$2.50 (500ML)**

Each year Polio paralyses thousands of children across Africa and South Asia. Since 2003 Aquavita is in partnership with The End of Polio Charity, to raise funds to eradicate Polio.

*For every purchase of bottled water you make, Aquavita will vaccinate a child. As an individual you can take part too and feel good about yourself!*

**ON BEHALF OF ALL CHILDREN AT RISK THANK YOU IN ADVANCE  
FOR CHOOSING TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST POLIO.  
WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL.**

**THE GLOBAL POVERTY PROJECT**

**THE END OF POLIO**



## Appendix 6

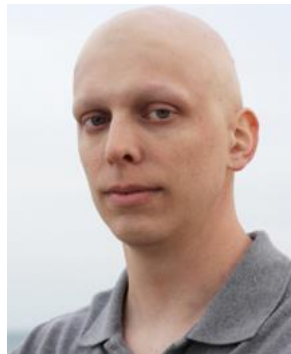
### Study 6: Prostate Cancer stimuli



**PROSTATE  
CANCER UK**



£2



Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men in the UK, over 40,000 men like Peter Allister are diagnosed each year. *Prostate Cancer UK* is the country's leading charity and we are dedicated to helping more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better quality of life.

All funds received from the sale of our pens go towards supporting research, helping to raise awareness and improving care for men like Peter.

*ON BEHALF OF PETER AND ALL PROSTATE CANCER SUFFERERS LIKE HIM, THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT.*

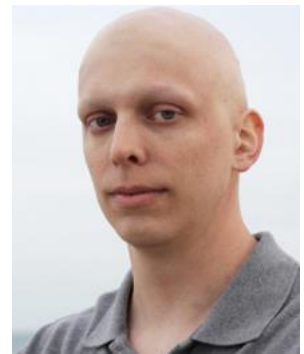
**With advance gratitude expression**



**PROSTATE  
CANCER UK**



£2



Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men in the UK, over 40,000 men like Peter Allister are diagnosed each year. *Prostate Cancer UK* is the country's leading charity and we are dedicated to helping more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better quality of life.

All funds received from the sale of our pens go towards supporting research, helping to raise awareness and improving care for men like Peter.

**Without advance gratitude expressed**

## Study 6: Susan G Komen (Breast Cancer) stimulus

 <p>£2</p>	 <p>£2</p>
<p>Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women in the UK, over 40,000 women like Laura Cooper are diagnosed each year. <i>Susan G Komen for the Cure UK</i> is the country's leading breast cancer charity and we are dedicated to helping more women survive breast cancer and enjoy a better quality of life.</p> <p>All funds received from the sale of our pens go towards supporting research, helping to raise awareness and improving care for women like Laura.</p> <p><i>ON BEHALF OF LAURA AND ALL BREAST CANCER SUFFERS LIKE HER, THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR SUPPORT.</i></p>	<p>Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women in the UK, over 40,000 women like Laura Cooper are diagnosed each year. <i>Susan G Komen for the Cure UK</i> is the country's leading breast cancer charity and we are dedicated to helping more women survive breast cancer and enjoy a better quality of life.</p> <p>All funds received from the sale of our pens go towards supporting research, helping to raise awareness and improving care for women like Laura.</p>

With advance gratitude

Without Advance gratitude

## Appendix 7

### Study 7: Sponsor a puppy advertisement stimulus with advance gratitude



Every hour in the UK a person goes blind. When Jillian (pictured) lost her sight even routine activities became insurmountable struggles. Relying on the help of others made her feel frustrated and vulnerable.



At **Sponsor a Puppy** we make sure when people like Jillian lose their sight they don't also lose their freedom to live an independent and fulfilling life. We provide support by training puppies to become guide dogs and life changing loyal companions

***Please sponsor a guide pup from just £1 a week. Your donation will change someone's life – forever.***



**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR SUPPORTING A PUPPY IN TRAINING**

Registered Charity (209617) Office: Burghfield Common, Reading RG7 3YG



## Study 7: Low ethical credibility condition manipulation



### CHARITY NAVIGATOR RATING FOR SPONSOR A PUP

Criteria	Score*
CEO compensation (£ 125,000 per year)	★☆☆☆
Accountability and Transparency	★★☆☆
Fundraising Practices	★★☆☆
Financial Health	★★★★

**CEO annual compensation-** benchmarked against the charitable industry **average of £ 65,000**

**Fundraising Practices-** commitment to non-intrusive marketing practices

**Accountability & Transparency-** commitment to good governance, best practices and voluntary spending disclosure

**Financial Health** - how efficiently and effectively the charity raises and makes use of people's donations

\*Data Courtesy of Charity Navigator: 1 star= very bad, 4 stars= excellent

## Study 7: High ethical credibility condition manipulation



### CHARITY NAVIGATOR RATING FOR SPONSOR A PUPPY

Criteria	Navigator Score*
CEO compensation (£ 35,000 per year)	★★★★
Accountability and Transparency	★★★★
Fundraising Practices	★★★★
Financial Health	★★★★

**CEO annual compensation-** benchmarked against the charitable industry **average of £ 65,000**

**Fundraising Practices-** commitment to non-intrusive marketing practices

**Accountability & Transparency-** commitment to good governance, best practices and voluntary spending disclosure

**Financial Health** - how efficiently and effectively the charity raises and makes use of people's donations

\*Data Courtesy of Charity Navigator: 1 star= very bad, 4 stars= excellent

## Appendix 8

### Study 8: WWF Advertisement stimuli



Advance Gratitude Condition

VS



Control Condition

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